



Territorial Cooperation projects 2007-2013: Project Evaluation and Selection Manual





DISCLAIMER: This tool was issued by INTERACT during the 2000-2006 programming period and aims at spreading good examples and lessons learnt to enable a successful implementation of the 2007-2013 programming period. A few modifications have been made to the original version available in hard copy.

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INTERACT hopes this tool will contribute to “Sharing INTERREG experiences” and encourage other Community Initiative programmes to share their skills and knowledge with INTERREG stakeholders through INTERACT.

INTERACT Point Tool Box

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT	4
ANALYSIS OF THE INTERREG III PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESSES	5
PROJECT EVALUATION AND SELECTION MANUAL	8
1. DEFINING EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESSES FOR THE 2007-2013 PROGRAMMING PERIOD	8
2. BASIC FEATURES OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS.....	10
3. EVALUATION PHASES.....	18
a. Eligibility check (formal compliance).....	19
b. Strategic evaluation (suitability to the programme).....	20
c. Operational evaluation	21
4. TENTATIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR A GOOD PRACTICE EVALUATION SYSTEM.....	22
a. Strategic criteria	22
b. Operational criteria.....	22
c. Scoring system and thresholds.....	23
5. THE EVALUATORS	24
6. THE EVALUATION PROCESS	25
a. <i>Preparatory works</i>	25
b. <i>Perform eligibility check of received proposals</i>	26
c. <i>Execution and output of the evaluation process</i>	26
7. THE SELECTION PROCEDURE	28
8. EVALUATION CHECK LIST	29

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document, Project Evaluation and Selection Manual, has a triple objective:

1. To analyse the existing evaluation systems and procedures in the different territorial cooperation programmes
2. To select and compile the observed good practices
3. To define a Manual to be used in the 2007-2013 programming period for the evaluation and selection of projects.

The document proposes a systemic way to undertake evaluation and selection processes based in good practice examples found during its research.

The Manual of the document is intended to be a general guide to be followed by the persons responsible for the preparation, management and execution of the evaluation and selection of projects in the different territorial cooperation programmes.

Calls for proposals of each territorial cooperation programme should have a specific evaluation set-up, perhaps requiring special features. The Manual hereby presented is not a direct application manual, but a source providing the information and methodology required to build specific guidelines.

The contents of the Manual have been produced using data obtained from the following sources:

- Inputs from the INTERACT Programme
- The official INTERREG III programmes' documentation
- The questionnaires sent to all INTERREG III programmes
- Related documents from different priority areas of the EU's latest Framework Programmes
- Experience and knowledge about EU Programmes in general, and specifically about INTERREG III programmes

ANALYSIS OF THE INTERREG III PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESSES

The analysis of project evaluation processes in the 2000-2006 programming period have provided with the following features:

- Guides for Project Applicants did not always contain all the information needed in order to correctly prepare a proposal in compliance with what is required. In particular, information about the evaluation process and criteria, the eligibility check list and the scoring system should be included in a Good Practice Guide for Project Applicants.
- Guides for Project Evaluators, when existing, did not always contain all the information needed either, especially information about the evaluation criteria and the scoring system that had to be available to both project applicants and evaluators.
- Even if all programmes made a list of evaluation criteria available to the evaluators, there is a sizeable number of programmes without a clear scoring system. The use of this kind of system, while applying evaluation criteria, is absolutely necessary to assure a transparent and equal evaluation.
- Evaluation systems used clearly defined evaluation criteria, but an important number of programmes did not use an overall threshold and a partial threshold by criteria, making it difficult to compare project applications and to decide which proposals are approved.
- An Evaluation Report was sent to the applicants in less than half of the programmes. It did not include in many cases the scores and/or comments from evaluators. Both are necessary to guarantee transparency and improve proposals that may be submitted in the next call.
- Eligibility checks were performed in all programmes. Project applicants were not always rejected when not complying with the requirements. Flexibility in the system may lead to a subjective project selection.
- There was little use of independent evaluators, and this, linked to the problems stemming from the scoring system, may produce obscure results. The extensive use of independent experts as evaluators is a major requirement to be considered by programmes.
- Project applications were evaluated by more than one evaluator and the results of the individual evaluations were shared at evaluation meetings, which is a good practice to avoid risky decisions.
- Signing contracts with the evaluators, dealing with conflicts of interest and assuring their confidentiality through confidentiality agreements were not widespread practices. These should be considered by programmes for implementation.
- The anonymity of the applicants was not a practice in programmes. This fact may produce undesirable effects in the evaluation of the proposals if an objective system –scoring– is not put into practice.
- Evaluation sessions were spread over time and space; in most programmes the proposals are sent to the evaluators for their examination and evaluation.

- In general, evaluators do not produce a scored and ranked shortlist that would lie at the origin of the final decision. This practice is to be considered by programmes for implementation.
- In general, evaluation was carried out by Joint Technical Secretariats, with some expert advice for technical issues. Most of these programmes did not have a 'standard' evaluation system. Standard Evaluation System should be considered by territorial cooperation programmes for implementation.

Project Evaluation and Selection Manual

PROJECT EVALUATION AND SELECTION MANUAL

Over the last few years, there has been a strong trend within the European Commission towards standardisation and unification of rules and procedures regarding the whole process of project application, evaluation, selection and negotiation in the different types of programmes co-financed with EU funds. This trend is compatible with the consideration of the specific and, in some cases unique, features and characteristics of the different programmes.

Therefore, the sources used to produce this section are twofold:

- The information obtained from available sources about the specific features of the territorial cooperation programmes.
 - The contents and structure of similar documents from other EU-funded programmes.

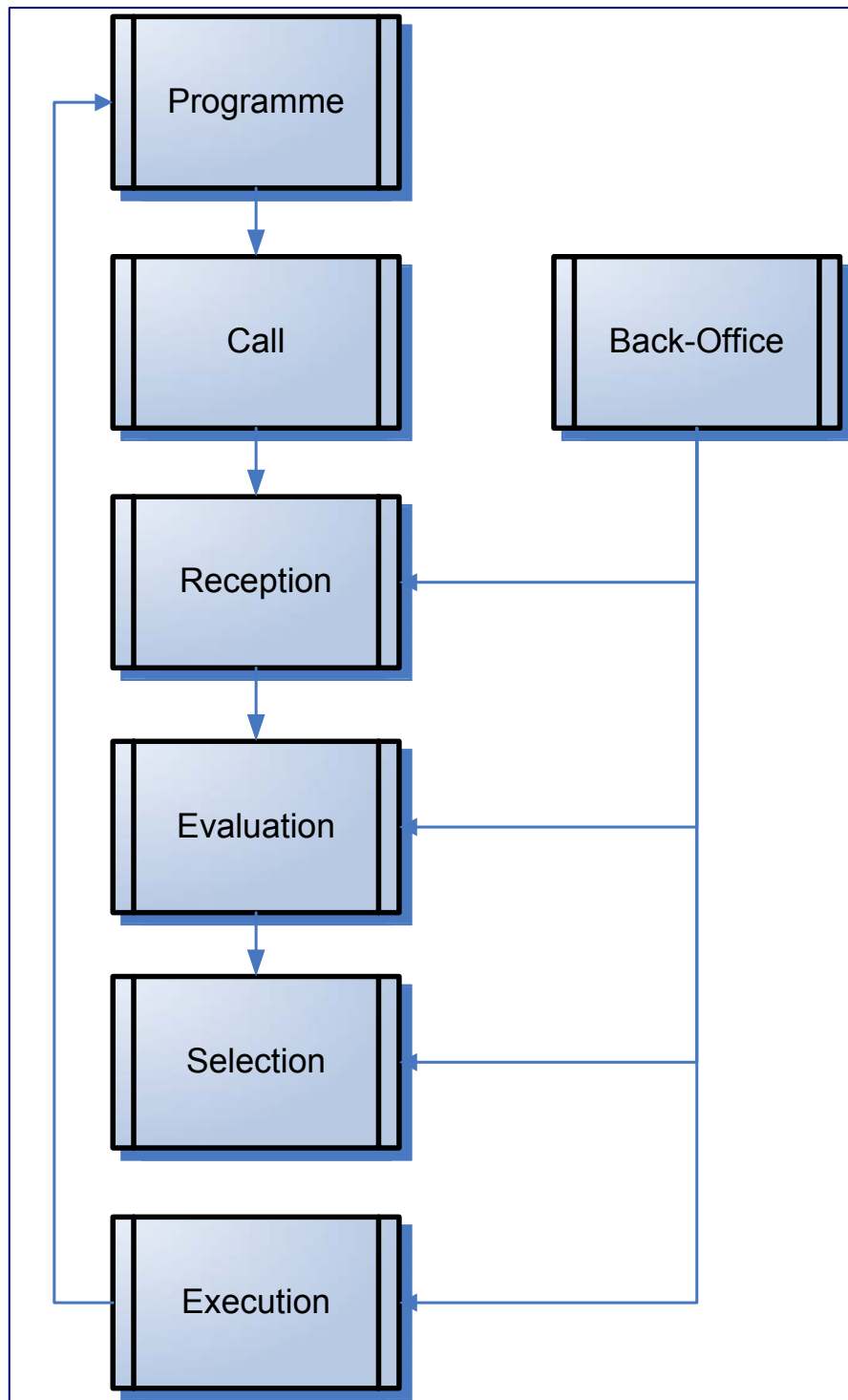
1. **DEFINING EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESSES FOR THE 2007-2013 PROGRAMMING PERIOD**

The evaluation and selection processes are part of an overall process that starts with the preparation of any territorial cooperation programme itself and concludes with the final execution of the projects. This process is presented in Figure 1.

Steps that lead to project selection processes and to the final implementation of territorial cooperation programmes are in brief:

- *Programming* – referring to the set of Regulations that are the legal basis of the Territorial Cooperation Objective, to the Operational Programme for each specific programme
- *Call for Proposals* – communication to potential project applicant to present proposals and the steps to do it, whatever the system and procedure of this communication may be. A call can be supported by a specific document or be included in the general documentation of the programme, and it may be an open call or have a deadline.
- *Reception of Proposals* – procedure for receiving project applications according to the system established in the call and for registering all the relevant parameters (date, time...). This step includes the transfer of the project applications to the responsible for project evaluation.
- *Project evaluation* – process of assessment of the project applications, according to the procedure and criteria established, scoring and ranking systems, including the rejection of any proposals that do not comply with the requirements.
- *Project selection* – process of selecting a set of final proposals, according to the scoring and ranking systems for project evaluation, taking into account the funds available in each call and/or period of selection.
- *Project implementation* – execution of projects, according to the contents of the proposals and the recommendations issued after the evaluation and selection process, if these exist.

Figure 1: Evaluation and Selection processes



2. BASIC FEATURES OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

A good practice evaluation process should fully comply with the following set of features:

- Homogeneity and Transportability
- Traceability.
- Confidentiality
- Independence
- Simplicity
- Technical soundness
- Completeness
- Visibility
- Logical timetable
- Right organization

Each of the features listed above is developed in further detail in the following pages. Good practice examples have been inserted as to illustrate the messages here enclosed.

HOMOGENEITY AND TRANSPORTABILITY

A good practice evaluation process needs to provide with core elements that ensure a transparent evaluation. Nevertheless, the system should leave enough room to be customized by any territorial cooperation programme to its specific needs.

Good Practice Example: The four Zones of the INTERREG IIIC Programme have developed a common space for project presentation, evaluation and selection. Within a common structure, all of them contain practically the same Section *Eligibility and Selection Criteria for Operations* Section, including

- Core eligibility criteria
- Specific eligibility criteria by topic for co-operation
- Specific Eligibility Criteria by Type of Operation
- Selection criteria – Content-related
- Selection criteria – Implementation-related

TRACEABILITY

A good practice evaluation process needs to present all steps and decisions documented and available for internal or external review.

Good Practice Example: the INTERREG IIIB ESPACE ATLANTIQUE programme shows a Good Practice system for traceability in the document of documents as explained in its document “*Audit Guidelines*” (*Piste d’Audit*). Section A of the document is completely devoted to this topic, covering the following items:

1. Information and support for drawing up the dossiers/ *Information et appui au montage des dossiers*
2. Call for proposals/ *Appel a projets*
3. Reception of application dossiers/ *Reception des dossiers de candidature*
4. Eligibility checks / *Controle d’admissibilite*
5. Transfer to national correspondants/ *Transmission aux correspondants nationaux*
6. Consultation at national (or regional) level/ *Consultation au niveau national (ou regional)*
7. Drafting of a report by the national correspondants/ *Redaction d’un rapport par les correspondants nationaux*
8. Transfer to the Common Secretariat/ *Transmission au secretariat commun*
9. Drawing up the instruction report/ *Redaction du rapport d’instruction*
10. Verification of the instruction/ *Verification de l’instruction*
11. Sending to members of the Steering Committee/ *Envoi aux membres du comite de gestion*
12. Selection of dossiers by the Steering Committee / *La selection des dossiers par le comite de gestion*
13. Results to be given to the Steering Committee / *Suites a donner au comite de gestion*
14. Notification of decisions/ *Notification des decisions*
15. Preparation of the Grant Letter/ *Preparation des lettres d’octroi*
16. Signing the granting documents/ *Signature des lettres d’octroi*

CONFIDENTIALITY

A Good Practice Evaluation process has no room for leaks on the contents of the projects or results of the evaluation. Confidentiality is a must.

Good Practice Example: The INTERREG IIIB CADSES NP programme shows a good practice in implementing confidentiality towards project applicants in its Assessment Manual:

“Documents submitted by project Applicants under the 4th Call for project applications INTERREG III B CADSES NP have to be kept confidential. The content of the application should not be published or forwarded to persons or institutions which are not directly engaged in the project assessment procedure or decision making. The project idea itself, as well as the description and concept of the project and the structure of the application, remain the property of the project applicant.

All actors within the assessment procedure have to guarantee that the privacy and confidentiality of all applications and documents submitted or published (incl. assessment sheets and other results of the assessment) for the 4th Call for project applications of INTERREG III B CADSES NP will be kept and that all national privacy laws and the EU-Directive on the protection of personal data (95/46/EC) will be respected.

It is not allowed to forward application and assessment documents to actors outside the regular assessment procedure, as is mentioned in the programme document and programme complement of INTERREG III B CADSES NP, especially not to project applicants or the wider public.”

INDEPENDENCE

A Good Practice Evaluation process has no room for conflicts of interest and political influence: intervention of independent experts should guarantee independence.

Good Practice Example: the INTERREG IIIC North Programme combines in a single document the commitment to impartiality and confidentiality that the evaluators must accept and sign. The text reads as follows:

"I, the undersigned _____, participating in the assessment of the applications submitted to the third application round of the Territorial Cooperation Programme _____, hereby confirm that I am aware that the assessment of applications has to be free from bias and must not be influenced by partial interest of any of the individuals involved in the assessment process. According to these provisions I have to sign a declaration of impartiality.

I declare:

- I do not act as Lead Partner or as partner of the operation which has submitted an application to the Territorial Cooperation Programme _____.
- I am in no other way individually financially involved in any of the operations to be assessed, i.e. as project coordinator, expert or consultant subcontracted by the Lead Partner or by any of the partners of the operation.

Should one of the pre-mentioned circumstances occur during the assessment, I will declare this immediately to the respective Joint Technical Secretariat. I accept that in this case I shall be excluded from the assessment of the respective application.

I accept furthermore that, if I have neglected to give the necessary statement as mentioned before, the respective JTS has the right to demand my resignation from the assessment team immediately.

Finally I confirm that I will maintain professional secrecy for the duration of every assessment procedure until its completion. I will not communicate to any Lead Partner, partner of an operation or any other person involved in the application any confidential information disclosed to me, or make public any information as to recommendations for decisions made in the course of the assessment."

Place, date and signature.

SIMPLICITY

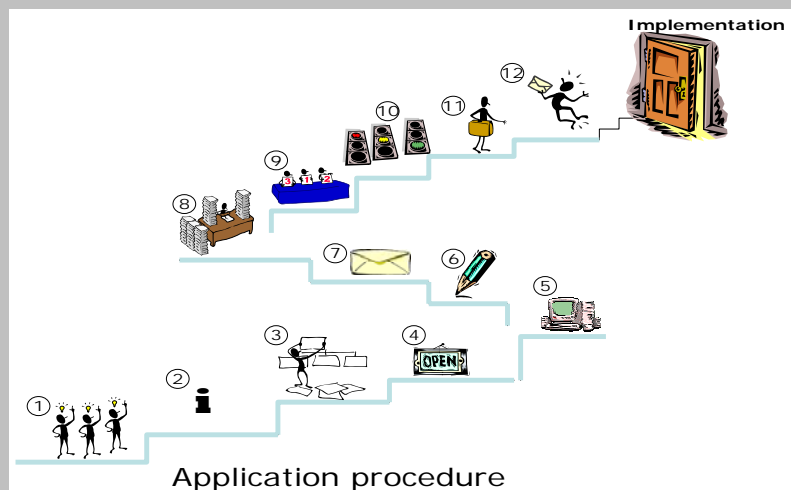
A Good Practice Evaluation process should contain rules and procedures that are easy to explain to project applicants and to implement by evaluators.

All territorial cooperation programmes analysed compile the evaluation procedures in a document so they are publicly available. Some of them however have successfully tried to present the process under a friendly and more accessible format such as:

Good Practice Example: The INTERREG IIIA FR/CH France-Switzerland programme developed a friendly and easy-to-follow *Proposers' Guide (Guide du Porteur)* built as a series of questions and answers. What follows is the full index of the Guide:

- > What territory? / *Quel territoire?*
- > What budget ? / *Quel budget ?*
- > What ways to implement the programme ? / *Quelles modalités de mise en œuvre du programme ?*
- > What eligibility criteria for the projects ? / *Quels critères d'éligibilité des projets ?*
- > What eligible expenses ? / *Quelles dépenses éligibles ?*
- > The axes and the measures / *Les axes et les mesures*
- > What organisation ? / *Quelle organisation ?*
- > How to set up an Interreg project / *Comment monter un projet Interreg*
- > How to fill in the form for filing the project / *Comment remplir la fiche de dépôt de projet?*
- > What the follow-up is to be and how to receive the subsidies / *Quel suivi et comment recevoir les subventions?*
- > Contacts and coordinates / *Contacts et coordonnées*

Good Practice Example: the INTERREG IIIC programme presents a good PowerPoint presentation on the whole process for project applicants "*From Theory to Practice*".



TECHNICAL SOUNDNESS

A Good Practice Evaluation process needs to be carried out by professionals with the right technical background (peers) and knowledge about the specific contents of each proposal.

Good Practice Example: the INTERREG IIIB CADSES NP programme provided with a good overview of the different stakeholders in the evaluation process in section A2 of the Introductory Note to the Applicants' Manual:

“...Firstly, there is the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) in Dresden with its international staff and its responsibility for the technical assessment according to criteria described in the programme and its complement. Secondly, CADSES Contact Points (CCP) in all partner states will have access to the applications and contribute the JTS work. Another task of the CCPs is to support National Committees (NC). NCs make recommendations to approve or non-approve projects and these Committees are made up of representatives of the regional and national level and by representatives of social and economic actors. Of key importance is the transnational Steering Committee composed by national delegations (plus the European Commission as observer) which takes the final decision on the projects proposed. Finally, there is the Managing Authority in Rome which is in charge of signing and supervising subsidy contracts for each project. This is the group of actors that assesses, discusses and/or approves project proposals and this is done on the basis of the application submitted (for more detailed information compare chapter 6 of CIP).

Because of the actor constellation described above, it is highly recommended to fill in the Application Form bearing the different actors in mind. Please be aware that applications will be read by experts from different countries and different disciplines.”

COMPLETENESS

A Good Practice Evaluation process and criteria need to cover all the relevant aspects of the proposals.

Good Practice Example: the INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area Programme presents a good practice project evaluation template. The document presents a detailed list of eligibility criteria, general selection criteria, and specific selection criteria by priority and measures.

Initial of project / Sigle du projet	
25a	Does the project propose specific results in benefit of the Atlantic Space? / <i>Le projet propose-t-il des résultats concrets au profit de l'Espace Atlantique?</i>
25b	Does the project propose innovative results in benefit of the Atlantic Space? / <i>Le projet propose-t-il des résultats innovants au profit de l'Espace Atlantique ?</i>
26	Will the project have a real territorial impact? / <i>Le projet aura un impact territorial réel?</i>
27	Will the project have a positive contribution to the balanced and lasting development of the Space? / <i>Le projet aura une contribution positive au développement équilibré et durable de l'Espace?</i>
28	Are the results expected at the end as regards economic, social territorial and environmental effects justified? / <i>Les résultats attendus à terme en matière d'effets économiques, sociaux, territoriaux et environnementaux sont-ils justifiés ?</i>
29	Does the project contribute to implementing the ESDP and European Union policies ? / <i>Le projet contribue-t-il à la mise en œuvre du SDEC et des politiques de l'Union Européenne ?</i>
30	Is the project compatible with the national policies of the Member States concerned ? / <i>Le projet est-il compatible avec les politiques nationales des Etats membres concernés ?</i>
31	Consisting with and conforming to the PO strategy, does the project contribute to a spatial perspective and an approach of territorial integration or to the reinforcement of the identity of the Atlantic Space? / <i>En cohérence et en conformité avec la stratégie du PO, le projet contribue-t-il à une vision spatiale, à une approche de l'intégration territoriale ou au renforcement de l'identité de l'Espace Atlantique ?</i>
32	Does the project have a positive impact on the environment in the Atlantic Space? / <i>Le projet a-t-il un impact positif sur l'environnement de l'Espace Atlantique?</i>
33	Does the project involve partners from three or more countries? / <i>Le projet implique-t-il des partenaires de trois pays ou plus ?</i>
34	Does the project involve partners representing the whole of the countries eligible in the programme ? / <i>Le projet implique-t-il des partenaires représentatifs de l'ensemble des pays éligibles au programme ?</i>
35	Is this a multi-annual project or one of integrated nature (multisectorial) / <i>S'agit-il d'un projet pluriannuel ou à caractère intégré (multisectoriel)</i>
36	added value / <i>la valeur ajoutée</i>
37	quality price ratio / <i>le rapport qualité prix</i>
38	the presence of the information necessary for following the indicators / <i>la présence des informations nécessaires pour le suivi des indicateurs</i>
39	transferral of knowledge / <i>le transfert du savoir</i>

VISIBILITY

A good practice evaluation process needs to be visible. All parts of the evaluation process should be well known in advance by the potential applicants, so they can use this information as a guide when building their proposals.

All territorial cooperation programmes analysed publish in more or less detail their evaluation procedures in their Programme Complements, which are public documents. Therefore the visibility feature is present in all Programmes. There are, nevertheless, some good examples of going beyond the mandatory information contained in the Programme Complement, either by publishing specific documents or showing the evaluation criteria and additional information in their Web sites.

Good Practice Example: the four INTERREG IIIA Programmes having Austria as a common partner:

- INTERREG IIIA AT/HU Austria-Hungary
- INTERREG IIIA AT/CZ Austria-Czech Republic
- INTERREG IIIA AT/SK Austria-Slovak Republic
- INTERREG IIIA AT/SI Austria-Slovenia

These INTERREG IIIA programmes have interconnected Web sites, all with the same basic structure, and where, at a couple of clicks, any interested person can find the relevant information about project presentation and evaluation criteria.

LOGICAL TIMETABLE

A Good Practice Evaluation process needs to combine an overall short duration with a rigorous execution of each step.

RIGHT ORGANISATION

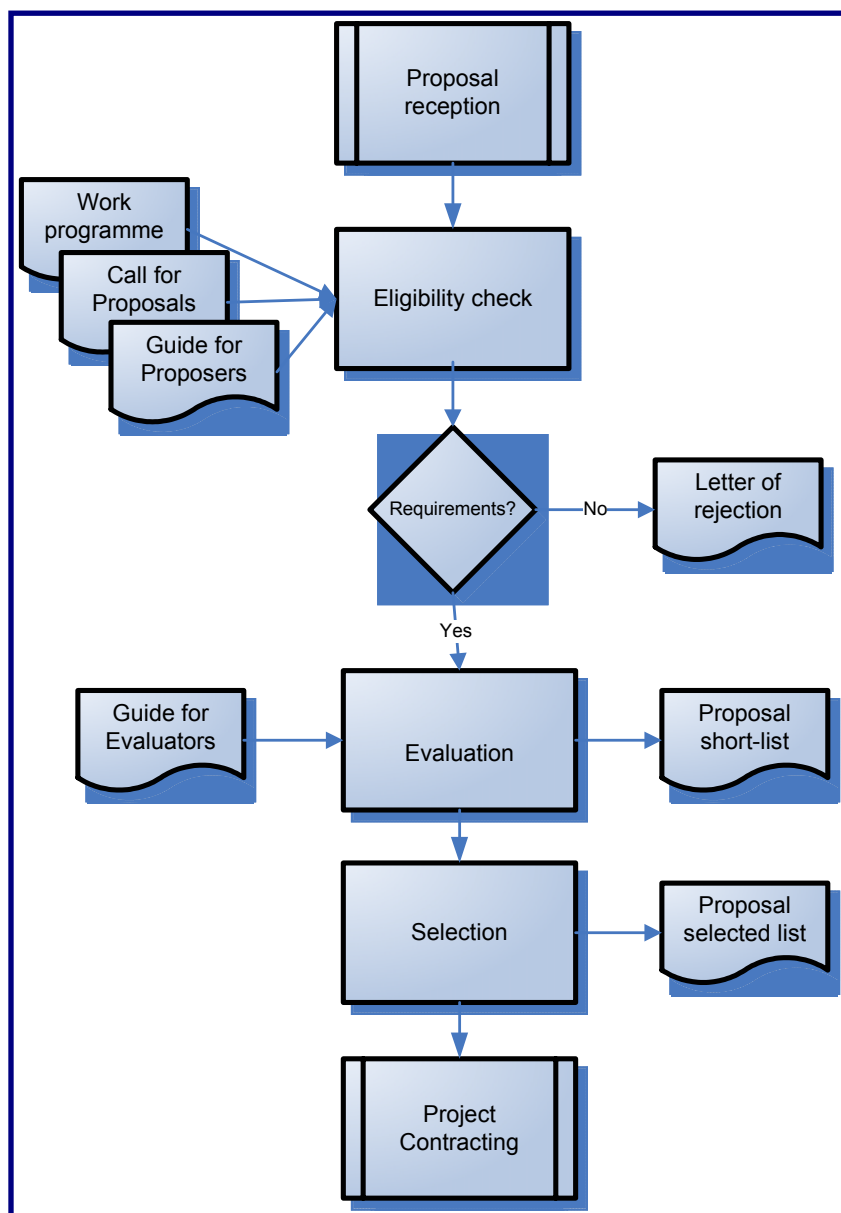
A Good Practice Evaluation process needs to have good logistics, appropriate to the number and type of the project applications.

3. EVALUATION PHASES

The evaluation starts immediately after the reception of the project applications, and ends with the selection of a final set of proposals according to the results of the evaluation process. A good practice evaluation system needs to include the official communication to project applicants with these results.

The overall process is showed in the figure below:

Figure 2: Evaluation process



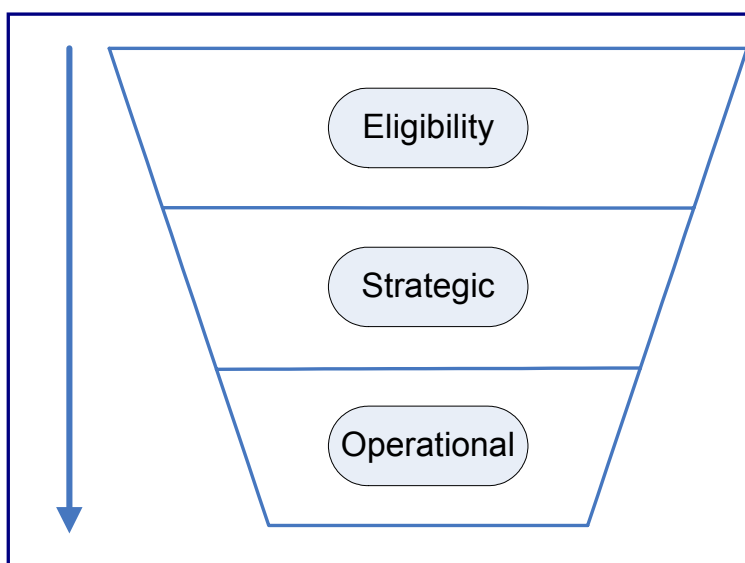
It is important for the evaluation process to end up with a short list of proposals that have complied with the administrative and technical requirements and that are ranked following their scoring in the process. This point can assure a transparent and fair selection procedure.

It is also recommended that all the project applicants receive an 'Evaluation Summary Report' that includes the results of the evaluation in each criterion, as well as the general comments of the evaluators. This information can be useful if project applicants wish to present the proposal again, and improve the quality of the future proposals.

In a good practice evaluation system, strictly speaking, three main phases are involved:

- 1. Eligibility check**
- 2. Strategic evaluation**
- 3. Operational evaluation**

Figure 3: Evaluation phases



A good practice evaluation system would present these phases in consecutively and in an exclusive sense: All proposals should go through the eligibility check, only proposals accepted in the eligibility check should then go on to strategic evaluation, and finally only proposals accepted in the socio-territorial evaluation should go on to operational evaluation.

a. Eligibility check (formal compliance)

This phase is meant to check compliance with the administrative requirements of the call, independently of the contents and quality of the project applications. The use of the word "evaluation" here is actually excessive, because the acceptance of a project application depends only on yes/no answers to a number of formal compliance questions. It is therefore better to name this phase "eligibility check".

Items to be checked refer all to those listed or required by the terms of the call. Some examples are:

- The proposal has been delivered to the right location within the required deadline (day and time of the day)
- The proposal is complete in terms of number of forms and documents required
- Originals and/or signed documents have been provided when required
- All required measurable items or ratios have been respected, for instance
 - Minimum number of partners
 - Minimum number of countries involved
 - Budget limits (low and high range)
 - Budget ratios among partners

It may be argued however, that rejections of project applications because of non-compliance with some eligibility criteria may be too drastic, and a source of loss of otherwise good proposals. The answer to this is of course that eligibility criteria (formal compliance) are mandatory for everybody, and everybody has had the same amount of time to prepare and present their proposals. Therefore to accept a proposal that does not meet all the eligibility requirements is grossly unfair to other applicants that have fulfilled the conditions.

b. Strategic evaluation (suitability to the programme)

This heading should include all the items that define the appropriateness of the proposed project within the programme execution framework. In other words, this phase of the evaluation must assess if the proposed project is relevant to the priorities and measures of the specific territorial cooperation programme and of the specific call to which it is presented. Evaluators should also assess if the proposal fits properly into the political, geographical, socio-economic and cultural environments where it will be developed, and if the partners in the project consortium are the right ones to pursue the project's objectives. This stage needs to cover also the technical and technological aspects of the projects, if appropriate.

Good Practice Example: The INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space programme presents a good practice example of a strategic call to search for projects suitable to the programme. Assessment principles in the 4th call of the INTERREG IIIB ALPINE SPACE programme followed the criteria laid down in the Programme Complement. However, in order to fulfil the demands on strategic projects, the fulfilment of the following criteria will be of specific importance:

- A wide partnership (horizontal approach) covering the relevant geographical scope;
- Partners from different levels of governance (vertical approach);
- The integration of different sectors (administration, science, economic actors);

- An approach and a composition of partners that raise new questions and suggest solutions that help improve an existing problem;
- The three dimensions of sustainable development (economy, ecology and social aspects) should be covered by the project's content;
- Experience of project partners in transnational project management will be an advantage."

The strategic evaluation is a determining factor, and should be carried out **before** and **independently** of the assessment of the technical quality of the proposal.

Before - If a proposal is not relevant because it does not fit into the programmes' boundaries, or it is not appropriate nor has enough priority or strategic value for the settings where it should be developed, it is worthless to assess its operational quality. A project in these conditions should be rejected outright.

On the other hand, if a project is deemed to be sufficiently relevant, if the project is interesting to the programme, any operational defects found during the operational evaluation could be the object of recommendations in order to correct them during the contract negotiation period, instead of being a direct cause of rejection.

Independently - A high operational quality of a proposal could easily obscure the fact that the project will not bring any real benefit to the communities where it will be carried out, especially if the evaluator has a strong technical bias.

c. Operational evaluation

The last phase in the selection process is to evaluate project proposals in terms of their operational quality. This is the most objective way and therefore the fairest one, to assign priorities within a group of projects that are all eligible and all **relevant**.

Basically, the operational evaluation refers to the assessment of the viability and the feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its profitability, not only in monetary terms, but in terms of resources used vs. results obtained. Planning, task structure, calendars, deliverables and milestones, management structure or partner's involvement are some of the items that should be taken into account when deciding that a proposal deserves EU financing, because the better these items are designed, the more chances the project has of being successful.

Good Practice Example: the INTERREG IIIC EAST Programme has applied a *Detailed Quality Assessment Check List* to the 4th Application Round that is also a good example of a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria, classified as follows:

Content-related criteria

Category 1 - Relevance of the proposal

Category 2 - Coherence of the proposal and quality of approach

Category 3 - Quality of results

Implementation-related criteria

Category 4 - Quality of management

Category 5 - Quality of partnership

Category 6 – Budget and finance

4. TENTATIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR A GOOD PRACTICE EVALUATION SYSTEM

This section deals with the two last phases of the evaluation process explained above, ***the strategic evaluation and the operational evaluation*** and aims at providing tentative suggestions to build up a good practice evaluation system regarding evaluation criteria, marks and thresholds.

The eligibility check does not require criteria and/or numerical scorings, just a checklist where yes or no are marked in front of each of the specific requirements defined in the programme and/or in the specific call.

To ensure the equal treatment of project applications in the different programmes, it is necessary to provide the evaluators with a framework of predefined evaluation criteria and a fixed scale of scoring and thresholds. This approach has been working with good results all across the calls issued in the last few years for the different priorities of the RTD Framework Programmes.

The tables below present some suggestions to keep in mind when selecting those criteria to be used in the strategic and operational phases of the evaluation:

a. Strategic criteria

Criteria	Explanation
<i>Relevance</i>	How the objectives of the proposal fit in with the objectives of the programme and into the policies and strategies of their territories. How the objectives of the proposal address the challenges of the programme.
<i>Impact</i>	The importance to the end users of the topics addressed in the proposal and the added value of carrying out the project within an interregional framework.
<i>Consortium</i>	The representation of the members of the consortium towards the end users, their commitment to carrying out the activities of the project, their involvement in the policies and strategies of their territories, their links with the objectives of the proposal and the strategies behind it.

b. Operational criteria

Criteria	Explanation
<i>Work structure</i>	The proposed task structure, milestones and deliverables, and how this structure helps to achieve the objectives of the project.
<i>Management</i>	The management structure of the project in order to monitor, coordinate, control and execute the different tasks.
<i>Resources</i>	How the partners distribute their available resources over the different tasks in the project, the soundness of the financial plan.

These criteria are just general guidelines that need to be completed and specified by each territorial cooperation programme according its strategic objectives, priority and measures.

c. Scoring system and thresholds

For the scores to be assigned to the different criteria, a proposed scale goes from 0 to 5:

0: the proposal fails to address the issue under examination or cannot be judged against the criterion due to missing or incomplete information

1: poor

2: fair

3: good

4: very good

5: excellent

It is strongly recommended to assign thresholds, depending on the importance that each territorial cooperation programme assigns to each of the criteria. A proposal failing to reach a threshold should in theory be dismissed.

According to the specific nature of the objectives and/or the call, it may be decided to weight the blocks of criteria. The weightings to be applied to each block of criteria are set out in the call.

Good Practice Example: the Programme Complement of the INTERREG IIIB North West Europe programme provides with a complete scoring system in its 'Section 6.2 Method of assessment':

"As mentioned above, the eligibility and selection criteria will form the basis of the decision-making process for all projects. The first step will consist of examining the eligibility of projects. The project will be declared ineligible if at least one eligibility criterion is not met. The second step will consist of ranking the eligible projects by assessing them against the relevant selection criteria.

Performance indicators will be used, on a grid ranging from "-2" to "+2", with the following meaning:

-2 = Very poor

-1 = Poor

0 = Fair

+1 = Good

+2 = Excellent

Project performances will first be scored against individual selection criteria 1 to 15. The resulting scores will then be determined for each of the "aggregated criteria". Finally, a global assessment will be proposed for the project."

5. THE EVALUATORS

The three evaluation phases defined in the previous sections require its own peers:

Phase	Evaluators
<i>Eligibility check</i>	Administrative and technical staff from the programme, with knowledge of the programme requirements and the specific requirements of the call.
<i>Strategic evaluation</i>	Independent peer in local/regional development in general and in the specific economic, cultural and social development policies of the territories involved in the programme.
<i>Operational evaluation</i>	Peers in project planning, management and control from both the technical and the financial points of view. They can be experts from the programme, if they meet the requirements.

It must be stressed that the independence feature necessarily means externality from the management structures of territorial cooperation programmes. This means that evaluators need to be peers without any direct involvement in the programme design and management and with the monitoring and control of the call and the projects, so that their personal vision and implication does not interfere with a neutral evaluation process. Independent peer means somebody who has the technical expertise needed to understand and evaluate the proposal, and who is not integrated in the structure of the programme and has no conflict of interest with the proposal.

In any case, independence is a key word in the whole evaluation process, and the programmes should issue specific calls for evaluators and take the necessary measures in order to build a database of eligible professionals.

Good Practice Example: the role and responsibilities of evaluation participants in the 'GUIDANCE NOTES FOR EVALUATORS' participating in evaluation of proposals for IST Priority Call 5 (6th Research Transfer and Development Framework Programme):

Independent experts acting as evaluators - The evaluation and selection of proposals is carried out by the Commission with the assistance of independent experts (evaluators).

Evaluators perform evaluations on a personal basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity. They are expected to be independent, impartial and objective, and to behave throughout in a professional manner. They conform to the "Code of Conduct for independent experts appointed as evaluators" which is appended to the Guidelines on proposal evaluation and selection procedures and must sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration prior to beginning their work. The confidentiality rules must be adhered to at all times, before, during and after the evaluation.

Additional experts may also be invited by the Commission to perform the special role of rapporteur / recorder of meetings during the evaluation. They also sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration."

6. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process itself can be divided into two major phases: preparatory works and the execution of the evaluation procedure. In between, the eligibility check must be performed.

a. Preparatory works

In the preparatory works, the most important thing is to assure the conditions to execute the evaluation process properly.

Good Practice Example: the Guidance Notes for Evaluators of the EURATOM programme contains a Good Practice description of this work:

On receipt by the Commission, proposals are opened, registered and acknowledged and their contents entered into a database to support the evaluation process.

Basic eligibility criteria for each proposal are also checked by Commission staff before the evaluation begins and proposals which do not fulfil these criteria are excluded. In accordance with Articles 3, 8 and 10.5 of the Rules for Participation and Articles 114, 93 and 94 of the Financial Regulation of the Community, no participant may fall under any of the exclusion criteria referred to therein. Any such exclusion criteria (e.g. legal status), may still be assessed at the negotiation stage.

Depending upon the number of proposals received, the evaluation may be carried out by a single group of evaluators or in different groups or sub-groups, split according to subject and/or instrument type. Evaluators will be informed about the precise breakdown of any groups during the briefing.

In organising the evaluation, Commission staff assign the proposals to research areas, as appropriate, taking into account the number of proposals received. The assignment of evaluators to research areas and the allocation of proposals to evaluators will also have been carried out, taking into account the experts' fields of expertise. If the subject matter of a particular proposal covers more than one research topic, appropriate means to evaluate it fairly will be established. This may involve, for example, inviting evaluators from other groups to participate in the evaluation of the proposal or forming an ad-hoc cross-cutting group of evaluators."

There are questions connected with the organisation, the logistics and the evaluators to be taken into account during the preparatory works. For each specific call for proposals the following steps should be taken into account:

Organisational aspects

- Establish the timetable for the evaluation sessions.

Evaluator questions

- Establish the number of evaluators required.
- Prepare a “long list” of potential evaluators based on their profiles matched against the call’s requirements.
- First communication round with “long list”: check availability.
- Prepare a “short list” of potential evaluators based on their confirmed availability and the list of received proposals.
- Second communication round with short list: check final availability, conflicts of interest, and confirm participation.

Logistic aspects

- Send Programme and call background documentation to selected evaluators.
- Assign evaluators to the different proposals remaining after the eligibility check.
- Prepare logistics of the evaluation sessions.

b. Perform eligibility check of received proposals

The eligibility check should be carried out by ticking check-boxes, guaranteeing the confidentiality of the proposals received.

An eligibility form should be filled out for each proposal on the basis of the information contained in the proposal. If it becomes clear that one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the proposal should then be declared ineligible and withdrawn from any further examination. If there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, it is possible to proceed with the evaluation, pending a final decision on eligibility.

c. Execution and output of the evaluation process

The following steps should be carried out for each of the two evaluation phases, strategic and operational:

Briefing of the evaluators

All evaluators should be briefed by representatives of the programme in charge of the call, in order to make them aware of their responsibilities, general evaluation procedures and the objectives of the call under consideration.

Strategic evaluation of proposals

Each proposal should be evaluated against the applicable criteria by one (or several) evaluators independently, who fills in (individual) evaluation forms giving marks and providing comments.

Consensus

For each proposal reviewed by several evaluators (due to the importance of the proposal or the call, the doubts in the first evaluation...) a consensus meeting should be held and a consensus

report prepared. The report should faithfully reflect the consensus of the views of the different evaluators.

Operational evaluation of proposals

Each proposal should be evaluated against the applicable criteria independently by each evaluator, who fills an evaluation form scoring marks and providing comments.

Consensus

A consensus meeting should be held with the strategic and operational evaluators and a consensus report prepared. The report should reflect the final and combined point of view on the proposal.

Proposal short list

A short list, ranked, should be prepared including all the proposals that are over the defined threshold, if this exists. The list, appended with all the Evaluation Summary Reports, should be transferred to the Steering Committee of the programme for the final decision.

Evaluation Summary Report

The Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) is the document that should be forward to the project applicant, with the results of the evaluation (score) and the comments from the evaluators. The ESR is based on the scores and conclusions reached in the consensus report.

For proposals which failed some of the eligibility criteria, the ESR should consist only of a remark in the overall comment identifying the failed eligibility criteria.

For proposals which failed to reach the threshold on the strategic evaluation criteria, the ESR should contain scores and comments for all of these criteria. For proposals which failed to reach the threshold on the operational evaluation criteria, the ESR should contain scores and comments for all of the criteria, to clarify to the project applicant the reason or reasons for the proposal's failure.

For above-threshold proposals, the ESR should contain all the scores and comments, as well as clear and specific recommendations to be taken into account for further negotiations or modification of the proposal.

Good Practice Example: this specific Evaluation Summary Report is taken from Annex V of the Guidance Notes for Evaluators. IST call 41:19th October 2005. Practically the same form is used in all the programmes of the 6 RTD FP.

1. Relevance (Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)	Mark:
2. Potential impact (Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)	Mark:
3. S&T excellence (Threshold 4/5; Weight 1)	Mark:
4. Quality of the consortium (Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)	Mark:
5. Quality of the management (Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)	Mark:
6. Mobilisation of the resources (Threshold 3/5; Weight 1)	Mark:
Overall remarks (Threshold 24/30)	Overall score:

7. THE SELECTION PROCEDURE

The selection task is the responsibility of the Steering Committee, as is usually described in the Operational Programme (OP) of each programme. It needs to be carried out following the indications existing in these documents and taking as a basis the short list produced during the evaluation process.

The information stemming from the evaluation is absolutely crucial to take correct decisions while selecting the best projects.

Good Practice Example: this is the Project Evaluation sheet in the for the INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED programme.

PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET											
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME INTERREG III B / ARCHIMED 2000-2006											
MEASURE - PROPOSAL No:											
Project Title:						Project No:		Project Code:			
Proposing Agency:					PROJECT EVALUATION						
Legal Representative:											
Tel.:		Fax:		E-mail:		CRITERIA FULFILLMENT PER CATEGORY		YES/NO			
								SCORING OF SELECTION CRITERIA CATEGORIES			
Authority:					Category A Criteria Fulfilment				$T_A =$		
Project Manager:					Category B Criteria Fulfilment				$T_B =$		
Tel.:		Fax:		E-mail:		Category C Criteria Fulfilment				$T_C =$	
Project timeschedule:					Category D Criteria Fulfilment				$T_D =$		
Total Budget (EURO):					Category E Criteria Fulfilment				$T_E =$		
					Category F Criteria Fulfilment				$T_F =$		
					Category G Criteria Fulfilment				$T_G =$		
Public Expenditure:				Private Participation:				TOTAL SCORE OF THE PROJECT		$T_A + T_B + T_C + T_D + T_E + T_F + T_G =$	
EVALUATOR(S) / HIERARCHY						COMMENTS					
PROJECT EVALUATOR:											
SIGNATURE/ DATE:											
HEAD OF THE UNIT:											
SIGNATURE:											
HEAD OF THE MANAGING AUTHORITY:											
SIGNATURE DATE:											

8. EVALUATION CHECK LIST

The Evaluation Checklist is the document provided to the evaluators to help them in their work and to assure that all of them have the same background and criteria for the evaluation and scoring of the proposals. The checklist is also useful for project applicants at the time of preparing their proposals, because they know the criteria against which their proposals will be evaluated.

Each programme should ideally draw up its own checklist. The following index is a tentative example of the items that should be included in such a list:

1. Evaluation Documentation (A...Z)
2. Evaluation Information Summary
 - Eligibility Criteria
 - Strategic Evaluation Criteria
 - Operational Evaluation Criteria
 - Score, Thresholds and Marks
3. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Evaluators
 - Independent Expert Evaluators
 - Programme Secretariat Officials
4. The Evaluation Process
 - Before the Evaluation
 - Briefing of the Evaluators
 - Evaluation of Proposals
 - Evaluation Criteria and Forms
 - Proposal Marking
 - Scope of the Call
 - Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality
 - Consensus
 - Evaluation Summary Reports
5. Reporting
6. Finalisation of the Evaluation and Project Selection
7. Annexes – Templates

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