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NEXT Romania – Ukraine

(INTERREG VI-A) NEXT Romania-Ukraine Programme

ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION MANUAL

Reference: Call for Proposals

Regular projects
and
Small Scale projects

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS	
Applicant	Any legal entity which submits an application, in partnership with other institutions/bodies, to be financed by the Programme.
National Authority	Entity appointed by each participating country to support the Management Authority in the implementation of the programme in its own territory.
Eligible expenditure	Expenditure made by a Beneficiary, related to the project financed through the Programme, which comply with the programme requirements.
Eligible area/region	The countries and their regions from the participating countries, as mentioned in the (Interreg VI-A) NEXT ROMANIA-UKRAINE Programme approved by the European Commission. Special conditions for implementation outside the programme area may be introduced in guidelines for the call.
Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JeMS)	The on-line system for the submission, approval, management and administration of projects
Joint Secretariat (JS)	The structure responsible for assisting the programme management bodies in carrying out their duties. The Regional Office for Cross Border Cooperation Suceava is hosting the Joint Secretariat for the (Interreg VI-A) NEXT ROMANIA-UKRAINE Programme. The office of the JS is located in Suceava, Romania
Lead Partner	Any applicant designated by the project applicants involved in the development of a project, to coordinate the development and submission of that specific project on behalf of all project partners.
Managing Authority (MA)	The Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration is the responsible body for managing the programme with a view to delivering the objectives of the programme.
Monitoring Committee (MC)	MC is the joint decision-making structure for the programme. It shall follow the programme implementation and progress in achieving the milestones and targets of the programme and is responsible for the approval of project applications, which will be awarded a grant
Participating Countries	Romania, Ukraine
Partners	All Project Partners and the Lead Partner involved in the development of a project.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

SC	Selection Committee
A&E	Administrative and Eligibility
RO-UA	Romania-Ukraine
EC	European Commission
JeMS	Joint Electronic Monitoring System
EU	European Union
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
JS	Joint Secretariat
NA	National Authority

INTRODUCTION

This document is addressed to all actors involved in the preparation, management and execution of the assessment and selection of applications submitted in the framework of the (Interreg VI-A) NEXT Romania-Ukraine Programme (*hereinafter referred to as the "Programme"*). It serves as a common methodology tool that provides instructions and guidance in order to ensure a standardised and high-quality assessment of applications.

Specifically, the *Assessment and selection Manual* (*hereinafter referred to as "Manual"*) provides information on:

- the role of the actors involved in the assessment and selection process;
- the principles for assessment;
- the assessment process in practice, for: *Step 1 – Admissibility (Administrative and Eligibility)* (hereinafter referred to as "A&E Check") as well as for State Aid Compliance and *Step 2 – Quality (Strategic and Operational) Assessment* (hereinafter referred to as "Quality Assessment");
- information on how to assess the selection criteria for each assessment step.

Contents of the Guidelines have been developed taking into account the relevant documents applicable to the implementation and management of the Programme: Programme document, Rules of Procedure of the Monitoring Committee, Application Packs of the first Calls for Proposals for regular and small scale projects. All documents are available on the Programme website.

1. ACTORS INVOLVED, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The evaluation process is performed online, by using the informatic system JeMS, through a step-by-step process, involving different actors. The key actors are the following:

1.1 MONITORING COMMITTEE

According to the provisions of the Interreg Regulation no. 1059/2021[1], Article 22 and the Rules of Procedure, the Monitoring Committee (MC) is responsible for the selection of projects to be funded under the programme and shall:
(a) ensure that selected operations comply with the Interreg programme and provide an effective contribution to the achievement of its specific objectives;
(b) ensure that selected operations do not conflict with the corresponding strategies established pursuant to Article 10(1) or established for one or more of the external financing instruments of the Union;

[1] Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments

(c) ensure that selected operations present the best relationship between the amount of support, the activities undertaken and the achievement of objectives;
(d) verify that the beneficiary has the necessary financial resources and mechanisms to cover operation and maintenance costs for operations comprising investment in infrastructure or productive investment, so as to ensure their financial sustainability;
(e) ensure that selected operations which fall under the scope of Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council[2]are subject to an environmental impact assessment or a screening procedure and that the assessment of alternative solutions has been taken in due account, on the basis of the requirements of that Directive;
(f) verify that where the operations have started before the submission of an application for funding to the managing authority, the applicable law has been complied with;
(g) ensure that selected operations fall within the scope of the Interreg fund concerned and are attributed to a type of intervention;
(h) ensure that operations do not include activities which were part of an operation subject to relocation within the meaning of point (27) of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 or which would constitute a transfer of a productive activity within the meaning of point (a) of Article 65(1) of that Regulation;
(i) ensure that selected operations are not directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement within the scope of Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations; and
(j) ensure that, for investments in infrastructure with an expected lifespan of at least five years, an assessment of expected impacts of climate change is carried out.

Concerning the process of selection of projects, the MC has the following responsibilities:

- To approve the assessment and selection manual
- To approve the assessment calendar and monitor its implementation
- to approve the Terms of Reference for selection of the external assessors/experts;
- to verify double funding of the projects included on the selected and reserve list and take the final decision on selected projects and on the amounts granted to them, based on the Final Assessment Report of the Selection Committee;
- to take a decision concerning the conclusions of the Report on appeals,

1.2 MANAGING AUTHORITY

The Managing Authority (MA) has the following main responsibilities related to the assessment and selection of projects:

- to draft the assessment manual, publicize and ensure regular up-dates
- to supervise JS in preparing Terms of Reference for selection of the external assessors/experts
- to participate as MA members of the Selection Committee
- to issue a decision concerning the composition of the Selection Committee (JS, MA, NA RO, NA UA)

[2] Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1).

- to introduce and validate specific data in JeMS during the assessment process.
- to grant/ ensure access in necessary databases, to JS assessors, to verify double-funding for the selected projects and projects included on the reserve lists

1.3 JOINT SECRETARIAT

The Joint Secretariat (JS) has the following responsibilities related to the assessment and selection of projects:

- to organize the entire assessment process, in accordance with the Assessment manual, the relevant procedure, the specific provisions of the calls for proposals and the MC decisions ;
- To ensure the logistical and administrative framework for carrying out the activity of project evaluation and selection and dispute resolution in optimal conditions
- by the designated Coordinator of SC to organize the process of discussing any particular case occurred during the assessment process and reaching a consensus regarding the further approach;
- by the designated Coordinator of SC to propose to the Selection Committee the list of clarifications needed to be requested to the applicants, if any, within the limits set by the Guidelines for applicants and the present manual;
- by the Coordinator of SC and Secretary of the SC to prepare reports over each evaluation step, showing: statistics, list of applications entering each step, list of application passing each step, list of applications rejected in each step and corresponding reasons for rejection, description of any particular case analysed and justification of the approach chosen.
- by the Coordinator and Secretary of SC to organise the process for analysing the appeals and prepare the report on appeals to be approved by SC.
- to carry out the administrative tasks connected with the assessment and selection process;
- to monitor the compliance with the working procedures and with the deadlines;
- to nominate the Secretary and the Coordinator of the Selection Committee
- to nominate the internal assessors that ensure the STEP I (Admissibility) of evaluation process check double-funding during the quality assessment step.
- to ensure the selection and contracting the external assessors involved in STEP II (Quality Assessment) and of State Aid experts
- to ensure the training of all internal assessors, external assessors/experts, members of the Selection Committee concerning the working procedures and relevant documents to be used in the assessment process and to provide logistic and administrative support for their activity;

1.4 NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Each National Authority (NA) has the following responsibilities related to the assessment process:

- to nominate NA voting members of the Selection Committee
- to perform, in step 1, through its member in the Selection Committee the eligibility check of partners according to their country of registration.

The National Authority from Romania (NA RO) will be responsible for the checks related to infringement (only for selected projects, in pre-contracting).

- The project is not affected by potential double funding (only for selected projects, in pre-contracting).

1.5 SELECTION COMMITTEE

The Selection Committee (SC) supervises and provides support for the entire assessment process. The work of SC is regulated by the provisions of the Guidelines for applicants and of the present manual.
The Selection Committee composition is approved by the MA. The SC is made up of the voting members appointed by the MA, NA RO and NA UA, and non-voting members (Coordinator and Secretary) proposed by JS and endorsed by the MA. In order to facilitate the smooth development of the selection process, each voting member nominated by MA and NAs shall have a substitute that can take over their tasks in case of unavailability for such a term that could lead to significant delays in the evaluation.
The SC will inform the Monitoring Committee, through the MA, regarding the evolution of the selection process.
Decisions within the SC shall be taken by consensus and unanimously.

The SC has the following main responsibilities:

- to supervise and provide support for the entire selection process.
- to supervise the assessment of the applications submitted under the call for proposals performed with the support of internal/external assessors/state aid experts;
- to discuss any particular case occurred during the assessment process and reach a consensus regarding the further approach; The decisions taken by SC as regards such particular cases will be recorded in the minutes of the meetings or, as a minimum, in the Evaluation Report of the respective step; The MA/NA representatives in the SC may be consulted if there is the need of a thorough understanding of the call rules and requirements or the provisions of the applicable national legislation.
- to decide over the clarifications needed to be requested to the applicants, if any, within the limits set by the Guidelines for applicants and the present manual
- to prepare, with the support of the coordinator/secretary and sign the reports over each evaluation step, showing: statistics, list of applications entering each step, list of application passing each step, list of applications rejected in each step and corresponding reasons for rejection, description of any particular case analized and justification of the approach chosen.

A. Coordinator of SC

The Coordinator of the SC is a non-voting member and is involved in each step of the evaluation. From the CS responsibilities, the Coordinator has an important organizational role, facilitating the collaboration between voting members, assessors, experts, applicants, MC, and ensuring a confidential, fair and equitable assessment of each application according to the assessment criteria applicable to the call(s) and in full respect of the relevant procedures, rules and regulations.

In this respect the Coordinator has the following main responsibilities:

- to ensure support to the voting members by providing the necessary technical information concerning the assessment process
- to distribute[3] the applications to the assessors/NAs[4] and inform them about the deadlines for performing their assessment tasks
- to supervise the assessment process by monitoring the work of the assessors/ experts involved in evaluation and by carrying out the quality check of the grids filled in by the assessors/experts/NAs and to request revisions if the case may be;
- to collect the request for clarification from the assessors, process them, and submit them to consultation and approval by the SC;
- to sign, on behalf of the SC the requests for clarifications addressed to the applicants, as well as any other correspondence with applicants;
- to mediate in reaching consensus when there are significantly different opinions between the voting members
- to ensure the compliance with the requirements of the impartiality, confidentiality and avoidance of conflict of interest of all the actors part of the selection process and to inform the MA, proposing measures, in case of detecting any incompliance;
- to compile[5] and sign the Assessment Reports for each step;
- to provide reports or centralized data requested by MC/MA.

B. Secretary of the SC

The Secretary of SC has an administrative role, mainly in support of the Coordinator in performing all their tasks, by carrying out all logistic and administrative tasks related to the assessment procedures, including:

- to circulate, collect and safe keep the signed Declarations of Impartiality, Confidentiality and avoidance of Conflict of interest;
- to support the Coordinator in performing the quality check of the grids filled in by the assessors/experts/NAs;
- to support in organizing the SC online meetings;
- to fill in and keep the minute of the SC meetings, registering the attendance to each of the meeting, the discussions and the conclusions and circulate them to be signed by the attendees;
- to support the Coordinator in preparing the correspondence to applicants
- to support the Coordinator in preparing the reports on each step of evaluation as well as the centralized data ;

C. Assessors

The assessors assist the SC in a confidential, fair and equitable way in the evaluation of the applications and they are working under the supervision of the Coordinator of SC. The tasks of

[3] With the support of the JEMS officer

[4] Only the grid for eligibility of partners

[5] With Secretary support

the assessors shall include assessment of the applications and attached documentation on the basis of evaluation criteria which are provided in the Guidelines for applicants and this manual.
Two categories of assessors are envisaged in the evaluation process:
-internal assessors (part of the JS staff) and
-external assessors (selected by other means, e.g by public procurement*, designation by each participant country**, -tbd).

**public procurement procedure will be launched by JS, using the Romanian legal framework, for all assessors that will be involved in quality assessment. The approval by the MC of the terms of reference applicable for all assessors will be required. The National Authority in Ukraine will support the selection process by making visible by own communication means the procurement procedure launched by JS.*

The internal assessors will be involved in *Step I Admissibility*, for performing the *administrative assessment* and *Eligibility of project and in the verification of the double funding for projects that meet the criteria for being included on the list of selected projects and on the list of reserve projects*

The external assessors will be involved in Step II Quality assessment. They will work remotely, but may be invited to the SC online meetings to support the process of selection by providing supplementary information if needed.

The assessors must be free from conflict of interest and are deemed to work in a personal capacity. Therefore, in performing their work, they do not represent any institution/organization, and are expected to act impartially, in an independent, objective and confidential manner and apply the best of their abilities, professional skills and knowledge in accordance with the Guidelines for applicants and the time-schedules provided by the Coordinator of SC.

Therefore they have to comply with the following rules:

- to assess independently the applications that were assigned to them by the Coordinator, and, in this respect, they must not exchange with other assessors information concerning the applications assigned, or to discuss any application with other member of MA/JS/NAs staff, except for the cases when they are invited to participate at SC meetings;
- to act objectively and highly professional, to accompany the assessment with substantiation and references to the content of the application, with a view to justify the score awarded. Any qualitative appreciation i.e. “poor”, “adequate” etc. will be followed by the evaluator’s arguments and reference to the application content and will be consistently explained.
- to provide the assessment for the applications assigned within the deadline set by the Coordinator;
- not to communicate with the applicants under any circumstances. Any request for clarification shall be done via the Coordinator of SC;
- to maintain the confidentiality concerning the applications assigned to them;

- to immediately inform the Coordinator of SC if during the assessment she/he discovers being directly or indirectly connected with a proposal to be assessed. Assessors must be aware that failure to comply with these rules may result in exclusion from the immediate and future evaluation processes.

Assessors must be aware that failure to comply with these rules may result in exclusion from the immediate and future evaluation processes.

D. State Aid expert

In order to check the relevance of State aid for project proposal, each application will be verified by an expert with competencies in State Aid. The conclusions of the assessment will be recorded in a separate grid, specific for State Aid, provided by JEMS.
The State Aid experts will be contracted by the JS, by using a procurement procedure and similar with that for the external assessors.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT

Project selection procedures shall ensure that the principles of transparency, equal treatment, non-discrimination, objectivity and fair competition are complied with.

The projects shall be selected and awarded on the basis of pre-announced selection and award criteria defined in the Guidelines published for each Call. The selection criteria serve to assess the applicant's ability to complete the proposed action. The award criteria shall be used to assess the quality of the project's proposal against the set objectives and priorities. Any conflict of interest shall be avoided. The same rules and conditions shall be applied to all applicants.

At the same time, the applicants shall be informed in writing about the evaluation results. If the grant requested is not awarded, the MA shall provide the reasons for the rejection of the application with reference to the selection and award criteria that are not met by the application.
Actors involved in the evaluation process declare to ensure the fulfilment of the following principles:

Confidentiality

The entire procedure, from launching the call for proposals to the selection of successful applications, **is confidential**. The SC and MC decisions are collective and its deliberations must remain secret. All persons involved in the assessment and selection process are bound to secrecy.

Therefore, all information made available to persons involved in the assessment and selection process is to be treated as strictly confidential and specifically:

- No information on the submitted applications or the results of the assessment may be made public to any other person than the applicants, in writting.

- During the assessment and selection process, the communication with applicants shall be carried out only by the coordinator;
- Any attempt by an applicant to influence the process in any way (whether by initiating contact with assessors/SC members or otherwise) may result in the immediate exclusion of its application(s) from further consideration;
- The names of the SC members/assessors/experts are confidential and must be kept secret;
- Assessment Reports shall be restricted to the, NAs, MA and MC members, at a later stage, and to persons assigned to audit the assessment and selection process provided they are free from any conflict of interest;
- All relevant assessment related documents shall be uploaded in JeMS;

The assessors/experts may not delegate their work to any third party.

Objectivity, impartiality and equality of treatment. Conflict of interest.

All proposals have to be treated impartially on their merits, and similarly assessed, following an appraisal strictly based upon the information they contain against the rules set up by the Guidelines published for each Call, and irrespective of where the applicant and its partners originate and their identity. Impartiality applies to SC (both voting and non-voting) members, as well as to the assessors and technical support staff.

In this respect, SC members, assessors/experts cannot be involved in the assessment process if they have a personal link to institutions or individuals from these institutions that submitted application forms. Any case of possible conflict of interest has to be reported to the SC Secretary/Coordinator, so that the proposal may be assigned to someone else. In line with the above-mentioned principles, before starting the evaluation, all SC (both voting and non-voting) members, as well as the assessors must sign a Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality and absence of conflict of interest, that must be followed before, during and after the evaluation. By signing this Declaration, they commit themselves to strict confidentiality and impartiality concerning their tasks and they declare not to have any conflict of interest. Therefore, assessors with existing or past links with any applicant must declare it and immediately withdraw from the assessment or evaluation process. Persons involved in the assessment and evaluation process should also declare not to offer their services under a subcontract to successful project applicants that they have assessed.
Any participant in the evaluation process shall immediately inform the Coordinator if during the evaluation she/he discovers being directly or indirectly connected with a proposal that she/he has been asked to evaluate and which impairs her/his impartiality.
The Coordinator will take all necessary actions to remove the conflict of interests (replacement/reallocation of the project)

MC members must also be free of any conflict of interest before taking any decision as regards the projects, or the conclusions on the appeals.

Transparency and clarity

All selection criteria, as presented in the Guidelines for Applicants, shall not be changed during the assessment and selection process.

In the assessment grids, each assessor/expert will have to provide comments written in an explicit and detailed manner so as adequate feedback can be provided in the Notification letter on the outcome of the assessment, to applicants.
The Coordinator of Selection Committee is responsible for ensuring the compliance with these rules during the process.

Quality
Applications selected for funding must demonstrate a high quality and must contribute to achieving the Programme's objectives and indicators.

Efficiency and speed
The procedures are designed to be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the assessment and respecting the legal framework within which the Programme is managed. All efforts should be made to complete the assessment within the deadlines agreed upon and all persons concerned must respect the calendar.

Applications will be distributed by the Coordinator, and the Coordinator will keep evidence of the progress made in assessing the applications. Assessors are accountable for complying with the agreed timeframe towards the Coordinator, and furthermore to the MA and MC.

Traceability
The overall assessment and selection process shall be documented and recorded in the assessment reports. Documents used during the process (applications – if the case, assessment grids, communications with applicants, Declarations of impartiality, confidentiality and for avoidance of conflict of interest, Assessment Report, grids signed by each assessor and other documents) should be uploaded in the JeMS , for possible controls, while ensuring confidentiality. These documents shall be kept for 5 years from 31 December of the year in which the last payment by the managing authority to the beneficiary is made (according to art. 82 of the CPR 1060/2021).

3. PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

In order to ensure a smooth, effective and efficient assessment and selection process, the following main activities shall be performed before the assessment and selection process starts:

In addition to these, all persons involved in the assessment process shall carry out any other related necessary activity.

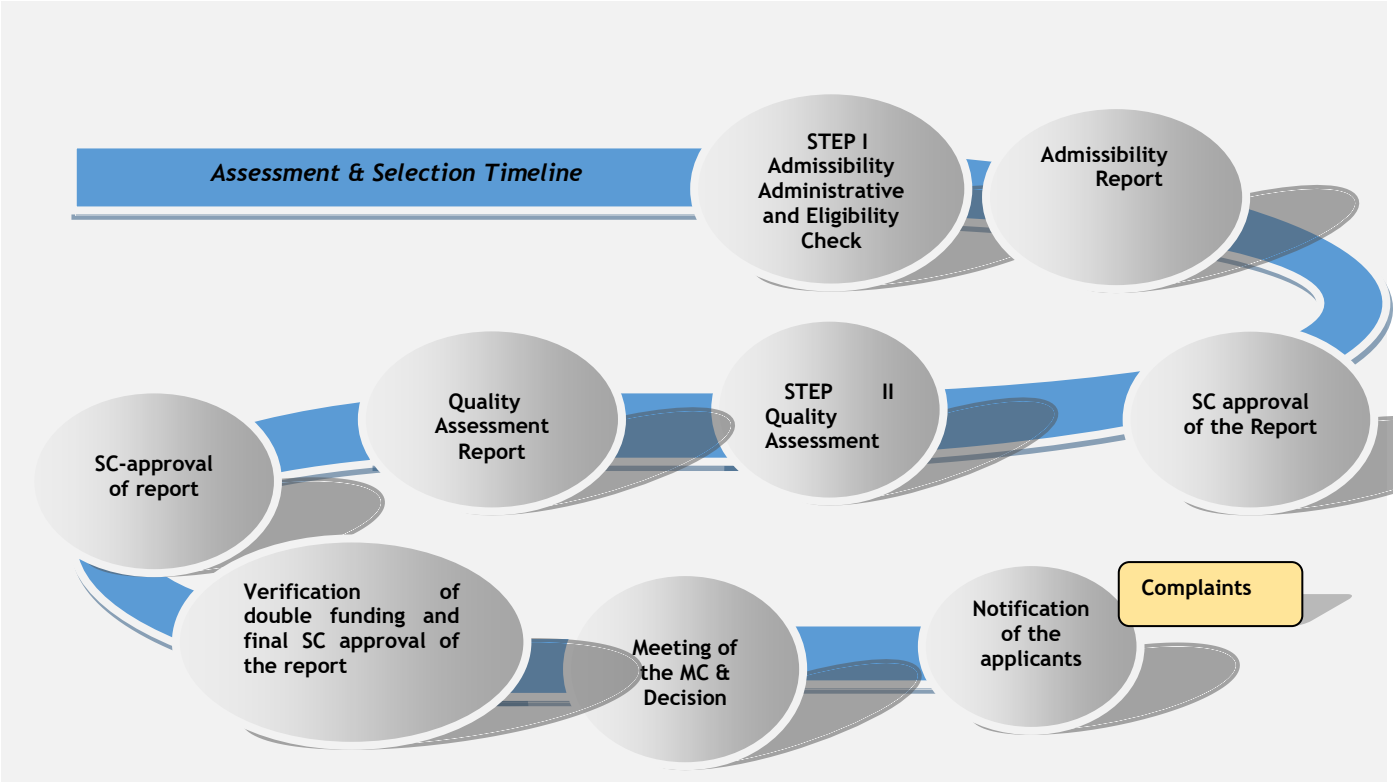
ACTORS	MAIN TASKS
Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat	– Prepare the Assessment and Selection Manual – JS proposes the Coordinator and Secretary of the SC, endorsed by MA; – MA nominates members and substitutes of the SC – JS provides internal assessors for performing Step I and the verification of double funding – MA approves the list of the internal assessors proposed be the JS, and members of the SC, including the Coordinator and Secretary – MA manages JEMS at the Programme level – The Coordinator of SC manages the information uploaded in JEMS;

ACTORS	MAIN TASKS
	– JS Elaborates Terms of Reference for the selection of the external assessors/experts under the MA supervision and with the approval of MC and launch the procurement procedure – JS&MA ensure training of internal/external assessors/SC – Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest
National Authorities	– Propose voting members and substitutes for SC per country - Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest
Monitoring Committee	– Approves the Assessment and Selection Manual – Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest
Selection Committee	– Participate to the training sessions organized by the Programme – The SCs will use for correspondence with the applicants and assessors dedicated e-mail accounts per call – Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest
Assessors/experts	– Participate to the online training sessions organized by the JS/MA; – Sign Declarations of impartiality and confidentiality, and Declarations regarding the conflict of interest

In addition to the above, all persons involved in the assessment process shall carry out any other related necessary activity.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

The different steps of the assessment process in the framework of the (Interreg VI-A) NEXT Romania-Ukraine Programme can be summarized as follows:



Although the steps to be followed are common for regular and small scale projects, assessors/experts shall perform the assessment by observing the applicable requirements included in the related Guidelines and annexes for each call for proposals.

Particularities to be considered by the assessors/experts depending on the type of projects are underlined in the text of this guideline, otherwise, all other instructions, approach, deadlines, etc. are generally applicable.

4.1 STEP 1 - ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY COMPLIANCE CHECK

4.1.1. Admissibility

The Admissibility Check is performed based on criteria in Annexes K1 and K2 to the Guidelines for Grant Applicants, applicable for regular or small-scale projects, as the case.

The Administrative Compliance is performed based on criteria set in **grid K1** by the internal assessors under supervision of Coordinator.

- After the deadline for the submission period the JeMS administrator/coordinator/secretary exports from JeMS the list of all applications

submitted, with project code, name, acronym, estimated start and end date, name of the Lead Partner, the corresponding countries, etc.

- The Coordinator, with the support of Secretary and JEMS officer, allocates, on a random basis,the applications, to the internal assessors and communicate the deadline for performing the task;
- Each application is checked by two internal assessors. Each assessor fills in a separate grid.
- For each criterion of the grid, the assessor has to tick the "yes/no/not applicable" box, as the case, and introduce brief justification in the "Comments" field, if the case. The comments shall be clearly formulated and detailed enough so that to be used for informing the applicants on the outcome of the assessment.
-
- The Coordinator, with the support of Secretary, checks the consistence of the two grids per application, and in case of inconsistencies within a grid or between the two grids, requests the internal assessors to reperform the assessment.
- All criteria included in the administrative grid K1 must be fulfilled in order for the application to pass this step of the evaluation.
- The Coordinator, with the support of the Secretary, will prepare the section of the Assessment report STEP 1 concerning the Administrative check. The report can be consolidated for all the specific objectives of the call, or, where it is considered appropriate, the reports can be drafted per specific objective. The report will include the ***List of projects that passed the Administrative step*** and the list of the projects rejected, as well as the reasons for rejection.
- At the end of the stage, this section of the Assessment Report STEP I shall include all the projects rejected and/or passing the administrative check.
-

Actions in JEMS: As soon as the assessors check is completed (after clarifications, if needed), they press 'FINISH CHECKLIST', then "CONFIRM".

The Eligibility check consists of verification of *Eligibility of the project* and *Eligibility of the applicant/partners* and will be performed based on criteria specified in the eligibility grids , as follows:

Eligibility of the project

- The Coordinator, with the support of Secretary and JEMS Administrator, assigns the applications from the List of projects that passed the Administrative step, to the internal assessors, preferable to the same assessors that checked the application in the administrative step.
- Each application will be checked independently by 2 internal assessors who will fill in their own grid.
- For each criterion of the grid, the assessor has to tick the "yes/no/not applicable" box, as the case, and introduce brief justification in the "Comments" field. The comments shall be clearly formulated and detailed enough so that to be used for informing the applicants on the outcome of the assessment.

- The Coordinator, with the support of the Secretary, will prepare the section of the Assessment report STEP 1 concerning the eligibility check for projects (the report can be prepared per SO if so decided by the SC). The report will include the List of projects that

passed the Eligibility check for projects and the list of the projects rejected, as well as the reasons for rejection."

- Actions in JEMS: As soon as the assessors check is completed (after clarifications, if needed), they press 'Finish checklist', then "Confirm".

Eligibility of the applicant/partners

- The Coordinator, with the support of Secretary and JEMS Administrator, assigns all the applications from the *List of projects that passed the Eligibility of the project* , to the NAs' members of the Selection Committee from Romania and Ukraine. Each of these NA members will only assess the corresponding partners by the country of registration and shall fill in the section *Eligibility of the applicant/partner* for these certain partners, mentioning Not Applicable. for the other partners.
- For each criterion of the grid, the assessor/NA member has to tick the "yes/no/not applicable" box, as the case, to introduce brief justification in the "Comments" field. The comments shall be formulated clearly and detailed enough so that to be used for informing the applicants on the outcome of the assessment.
  - The Coordinator, with the support of the Secretary, will prepare the section of the Assessment report STEP I concerning the eligibility check for applicant/partners projects (the report can be prepared per SO if so decided by the SC). The report will include the List of projects that passed the Eligibility check for applicant/partners and the List of the projects rejected, as well as the reasons for rejection.

    - At the end of the stage, this section of the Assessment Report STEP I shall include all the projects rejected and/or passing the eligibility check for applicant/partners.

If clarifications are necessary, the procedure described in section bellow shall be followed.

JEMS: As soon as the assessors/NA members of SC check is completed (after clarifications, if needed), assessors press 'finish checklist', then "Confirm".

4.1.2. Request for Clarifications

The way of addressing the requests for clarifications may differ between calls. In all cases the provisions of the Guidelines for the respective call will be applicable.

During the **Administrative and eligibility check,** in case of missing documents (for the second call also for incomplete documents), clarifications may be requested to the applicant, but not more than **once per project (once per issue for the second call)**. Lead partners shall provide the required documents (including those related to their partners) within the given deadline (maximum 5 working days (depending on the complexity of the clarification needed) from the date of written request by the Secretary-Coordinator of the assessment process.

During the assessment of eligibility, clarifications may be requested from the applicants, but no more than once per issue. Lead partners shall provide the required documents within the given

deadline (maximum 5 working days (depending on the complexity of the clarification needed) from the date of written request signed by the Coordinator of SC.

The clarification may concern the following:

i) missing documents* and/or
ii) documents other than the required ones are submitted (e.g annual accounts for another year and not for the latest financial year for which the accounts have been closed at the moment of submission of the Application, etc*)*, and/or
iii) submitted documents are not clear or do not contain sufficient information (e.g. in case of documents describing an investment; missing pages or parts, etc),

For the **first call, both for small and regular projects, missing documents submitted by the Applicant, following a request for clarification in the Step I Admissibility, are only acceptable if their issuing date is prior the date of submission of the application. The official documents submitted following the request for clarifications that have a later date than the application submission date will not be taken into consideration.*

The clarifications must not have as a scope or effect to improve the content of the application.

The procedure to be followed is described below:

- Each assessor and NA representatives in SC prepares a list of needed clarifications and submits it to the Coordinator of SC;
- The Coordinator of SC, with the support of Secretary prepares and signs the requests for clarifications and sends it to the concerned Lead Partner. In preparing the requests for clarifications the Coordinator will consider that the request for clarifications shall concern the entire partnership.
- Only one request for clarifications will be sent according to the requirements for the respective Call as provided by the Guidelines for applicants, as follows:

  In call 1 – in the administrative stage only one request for clarification per project can be made; in the eligibility check stage, only one request for clarification per issue can be made;

  In call 2 – in both administrative and eligibility check stages, only one one request for clarification per issue can be made.

-
- As a general rule, all aspects which require clarifications concerning an application should be centralised in one request per each stageThe request will indicate the deadline for Lead Partner to submit its answer to the request for clarifications of no more than 5 working days calculated from the next working day following the day when the written request was sent by email to the Lead Partner.

The answer to clarifications will be uploaded into JeMS and the assessors/NA assigned for the respective application shall review the grid, if necessary (add additional information in the "COMMENTS" sections, and then "SAVE' the work and press "FINISH CHECKLIST". After this stage, the coordinator will be able to start the quality check of the grid.

Failure of the Lead partner to provide clarifications within the deadline set in the request letter, leads to the rejection of the application.

JEMS: As soon as the assessors/NA members of SC check is completed (after clarifications,), assessors/NA members press 'finish checklist', then "Confirm".

TAKE NOTE!

Non – eligibility of one partner implies the non – eligibility of the entire application irrespective of the fact that the minimum partner requirements set out in the Guidelines for Grant Applicants are still met.

4.1.3. Consolidation of administrative and eligibility grids for Step 1

JEMS
The internal assessor/NA members of SC/coordinator review the grid and, provided that the grid is properly filled in, and no other revisions are needed, the coordinator presses "consolidator options - consolidates".
The grids cannot be consolidated if they are not "finished" by the assessors/NA members of SC.

The "consolidated" grid can be visualised by accessing the *JeMS – Assessment checklists* tool. The *JeMS – Assessment checklists* consolidates all answers and related justifications of the assessors/ involved in Step 1.

If revisions on the grid are needed (in case of insufficient explanations, or justification provided by the assessors), the Coordinator press "return back to assessor". The assessor has to revise, as the case. The grid is displayed as "draft", with no date. After revision, assessor press "save changes" and then "finish checklist".

In order to avoid any delays in the assessment and selection process, it is highly recommended that all necessary comments, explanations, etc to be included in the grid by the assessors/NA members of SC prior to finalizing the grid.

Then, the coordinator, accesses in JeMS "enter eligibility assessment", and reflect conclusion of the assessment, as follows:
- Project passed the eligibility assessment
- Project failed the eligibility assessment.

After this stage, the Coordinator starts to elaborate the Assessment Report for Step 1 - A&E Report.

4.1.4 State Aid Assessment

The state aid compliance assessment shall be made at this stage for the projects which passed the eligibility assessment for projects and partners, in line with criteria in the Annex G State Aid self assessment.
The state aid compliance shall be performed by an expert with competences in assessing state aid relevance, by using the grid set in JeMS, **State aid Grid**, which is compliant with Annex G State Aid Self-Assessment Grid of the Guidelines for Applicants.
Each application will be checked by **one state aid expert**.

To identify the direct and/or indirect state aid relevant activities, the expert will perform the state-aid compliance assessment based on the information provided in the application. The assessment must refer to the project as a whole. Consequently, when performing the state aid self-assessment, the criteria shall be applied to each partner and each project activity. Moreover, the potential "indirect advantage"[6] which may occur as a result of project implementation must be taken into consideration.

The **grid for State aid assessment** contains five criteria to be duly considered when assessing the potential involvement of state aid elements in a project:

1) Are public resources involved?
2) Are public resources granted selectively to the partners?
3) Is any of the partners of the project an "undertaking"?
4) Does any partner ("undertaking") and/or a third party ("undertaking") get an "economic advantage" that it could not normally get from the market?
5) Does the aid (financing of project) distort or threatens to distort competition and trade within the European Union? or between Ukraine and of the Member States

The state aid expert should perform its assessment and provide the answers to each questions YES/NO) in the grid but also justify the answers in the box dedicated for Justification. In the box/cell dedicated for *Conclusions and recommendations*, the expert will declare if the project is/is not susceptible of state aid. (see also Annex G_State aid Self Assessment of the Guidelines for applicants).

1.If **at least one of the above questions is answered NO**, there is no state aid involved and the expert for state aid should declare the project eligible

2.If **all above questions are answered YES,** the expert should provide detailed explanation in the column Comments regarding the activities and concerned partner that lead to the conclusion that the project could be regarded as state aid. The state aid expert shall provide in the Conclusions and recommendations box, either:

a) recommendation for rejection of the project, or

b) recommendation for adjustment of the concerned activities in order to eliminate the state aid situation*.

[6] An "**indirect advantage**" (indirect State aid) occurs when funds received by beneficiaries are channelled, during the project implementation or following the finalisation of the project, to identifiable undertakings/groups of undertakings (e.g. if the funds are used by the beneficiary for training of the employees of certain SMEs, a certain "undertaking" is going to benefit by an infrastructure developed by a beneficiary within a project, etc.). Thus, these third parties-"undertakings"- receive an advantage through the project activities that they would not have received under normal market conditions. This implies that they could be recipients of State aid.

**This would only be possible when, by adjusting the certain activity, the project objectives would not be affected. Removing partners from the project is not accepted.*

All projects that are in the situation mentioned at point 2 a) above, are considered rejected in the STEP I.

All projects that are in the other situations, are passing in the next stage of evaluation. The external assessors will have access to the recommendations of the state aid experts.

4.1.5. The Assessment Report for Step 1

The Coordinator elaborates Administrative and Eligibility Report, which includes also the state aid assessment and provides: the list of eligible/ineligible projects, the list of projects entered, rejected and passing each stage of STEP I (administrative, eligibility, state aid) information on duration, list of project distribution per assessors, grids, etc.

The Report for Step 1 and its annexes will be submitted to the SC for approval.

4.1.6 JeMS steps to be followed - STEP 1

1	"Select Checklist" - Access the Grid for "Administrative" / "Eligibility Compliance Check" / State aid assessment, Press "instantiate new assessment".
2	Analyse the application and its annexes
3	Select "yes", "no" or "not applicable" and fill in the „justification" box. In case clarifications are needed, Coordinator sends consolidated requests for clarifications (received from internal assessor/NA member of SC/state aid expert) to the applicant. In case no clarification is required or after receiving answers to clarifications, as soon as no other comments are needed to be added, assessors/ NA member of SC verifies that all fields are filled in, and presses button "save" and "Finish checklist".
4	The assessor/ NA member of SC/state aid expert - Verifies that all fields are filled in. If revisions are needed, Coordinator "returns back to assessor". The assessor/ NA member of SC reviews and fills in the grid, then press button "save" and "Finish checklist". If OK, the i coordinator presses "consolidator options - consolidates".
5	The coordinator - Access "enter eligibility assessment", reflect conclusion of the assessment, as follows: - Project passed the eligibility assessment - Project failed the eligibility assessment
6	The Coordinator uploads the Report for Admisibility in JeMS;

7	The Coordinator reflects Eligibility Decision (according to SC Decision): Enter "Eligibility Decision", Specifies in JeMS if the project is eligible/ineligible, press "submit eligibility decision" and "Confirm"

4.1.7. Provisional timeframe for Step 1

6-8 weeks	1 week	2 weeks
A&E Check of applications + Clarifications Requests + Applicants Clarifications Answers + Processing Clarifications Answers + Completing assessment grids	The consolidation of the assessment grids + elaboration of the assessment report	SC approval of the Evaluation Report

4.2 STEP 2 – QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

4.2.1. STEP II Quality Assessment approach

The Quality Assessment concerns only the applications that have passed the Step I Admissibility The Quality Assessment will look at the relevance, coherence of the application, quality of the envisaged results, of the partnership as well as on the budget and effectiveness of costs, in line with the criteria in the Quality Assessment Grid to the Guidelines for Grant Applicants (for the respective call).

The Quality Assessment of the applications is performed by external assessors.
As soon as the Coordinator reflects in JeMS the Decision of the SC following Step 1, she/he shall allocate the applications to external assessors – on random basis.
Each application is independently assessed by two external assessors.
In their work, the external assessors shall follow the rules set in chapter 1.5 D).

Quality Assessment comprises 2 types of criteria: strategic and operational.

A. Strategic assessment allows to assess the project's contribution to the achievement of the Programme objectives, its relevance and coherence and **consists of analysis of:**

- A1. Project relevance
- A2 Cooperation character
- A3 Project intervention logic
- A4 Partnership relevance

B. Operational assessment - allow to assess the applicants' financial and operational capacity and to assess the consistency and feasibility of the application, as well as its value for money and consist of analysis of:

- B1 Work plan
- B2 Budget

- B3 Communication activities

For each criterion, the assessor has to analyse the application and its annexes, score and justify the score in the "Justification" field. The comments on each criterion have to reflect and justify the score given for it and shall be formulated clearly and detailed enough so that to be used for informing the applicants on the outcome of the assessment.

If clarifications are necessary, the procedure described below in Section 4.2.4 shall be followed.

As soon as check is completed (after clarifications, if needed), assessors press 'finish checklist', then "Confirm".

4.2.2 Thresholds

For all criteria the maximum score that may be awarded to each criteria is that mentioned in JEMS grid (see also the grid on qualitative assessment of the Guidelines for applicants for the respective call).

Please note that JEMS does not automatically limit the score per criteria to those foreseen by the grid of guidelines for applicants, so that the external assessors must pay attention to the maximum values corresponding to each criteria, as mentioned in JEMs grid and not to exceed it.

The Strategic assessment is eliminatory, meaning that the project proposal must obtain an overall score of at least 40 points out of 55 points available at this section.

Moreover, proposals which do not obtain the minimum scores on certain criteria/sub-, will be rejected:

A 1 Project relevance

In call 1 A1 (2) Contribution to programe's objectives and indicators (minimum score is of at least 3 points but the score obtained at each of the three sub-criteria must be greater than 0, see Annex K3)

In call 2 **A1** (2) Contribution to programme's objectives and indicators (the score obtained at each of the three sub-criteria must be higher than 1, see Annex K3)

A2 Cooperation character

In call 1 . Added value of cooperation (minimum score is of at least 3 points, but the score obtained at each of the three sub-criteria must be greater than 0, see Annex K3)

Mandatory cooperation criteria (the score must be of at least 3 points, but the score obtained at each of the three sub-criteria must be greater than 0, see Annex K3)

In call 2 **A2** (4) Added value of cooperation (the score obtained at each of the three sub-criteria must be higher than 1, see Annex K3)

A2 (5) Mandatory cooperation criteria (the score obtained at each of the three sub-criteria must be higher than 1, see Annex K3)

A4-Partnership relevance (minimum score is of at least 4 points)

In call 1 **A4** Minimum score is of at least 4 points.

In call 2 **A4** No minimum threshold is required.

4.2.3. How to score and write comments and recommendations

Based on the JeMS access rights, each assessor shall carry out its assigned duties independently, making cross checks of the information included in the application (correlation between different sections, as applicable) and the information provided in the supporting documents (e.g description of investment versus basic technical information of infrastructure and cost estimation or feasibility study).

Assessors have to read the whole application carefully before completing the Quality (Strategic and Operational) Assessment Grid.

When assessing applications against selection criteria, assessors make a judgement on the extent to which applications meet the defined criteria. This judgement must be based on the information provided in the application. Assessors cannot assume information that is not explicitly provided. Nevertheless, information relevant for a specific selection criterion may appear in different parts of the application and assessors shall take all of it into account when scoring.

The assessors must pay particular attention to clarity, consistency and appropriate level of detail and draft their comments in English language, as these comments could be used to provide feedback to applicants.

The assessors should be aware that:

- when using value statements, such as “very good”, “good”, “satisfactory”, “weak” or “insufficient”, they should always provide some evidence explaining on which aspect this conclusion is based;
- a lack of coherence in the assessment grid (e.g a high score combined with critical or negative comments or a low score accompanied by positive comments) shall lead the Coordinator of the assessment process to return the grid to the assessor and request correction/clarification of (on) such inconsistencies;
- comments should always be formulated in a constructive way and must be based on facts in order to minimize possibilities of appeals from applicants. In particular, for scores below the thresholds, it is essential to provide a clear justification for rejection;
- the comments provided by the assessors will be used as inputs to the Coordinator to understand on which aspects to insist more when providing information to applicants on the assessment result.

Moreover, when assessing the application, the external assessors must take into consideration if the project objectives can be reached if certain activities have to be adjusted in order to avoid

the state aid situations, as per recommendation of the state aid expert in STEP I, and/or the budget for investment falls below the level foreseen by the call (if the case may be).

Anytime the assessors consider that for complying with the calls' requirements some adjustments are needed before contracting, the assessors must add recommendations in their grid.

A special attention in this respect should be given to the following situations:

- the application comprises one or more activities which are listed in the Guidelines for Applicants for the respective call, as *ineligible activities*;
- the budget includes one or more type of costs which are listed in the Guidelines for Applicants, as *Non-eligible expenditures*;
- there is a miscorrelation between the selected programme output indicator and the corresponding programme result indicator for the respective call;
- there is an overestimation or incorrect calculation of the target values of the outputs or result indicators;
- in case applications include more than 1 (one) work package, recommendations must be made to restructure the proposed activities under one work package and adjust the indicators accordingly;
- in the case of placing some costs in the wrong budget categories. In this respect, a special attention will be paid to the allocation for investment in case of regular projects.
- projects with investments in infrastructure with an expected lifespan of at least five years, in case the assessment on how the potential impacts of climate change were taken into consideration is not described (as foreseen by the Guidelines for Applicants)
- certain activities have to be adjusted in order to avoid the state aid situations as per recommendation of the state aid expert,
-

All these recommendations made by the assessors during this stage are to be dealt with during the contracting phase or in implementation, as the case may be, depending on the specifics of the recommendation. In case a selected applicant refuses to operate the necessary revisions or to provide the information or documents as recommended by the assessors, the respective application may not be contracted.

NOTE:
Assessors shall not suggest a higher grant than the amount requested by the applicant.

The scoring standards are as follows:
The minimum score that may be granted is 0, and shall be granted when the contribution of the project to that criteria is unsatisfactory.

The maximum scores of the criteria may vary in a range between 1 and 5 points, given the weight they have in the assessment. The maximum score for each criterion is mentioned in the JEMS grid. The assessor shall grant scores between minimum and maximum foreseen by each criteria, considering that *the **maximum score means Very good*** and ***minimum score means unsatisfactory***.

Maximum score
The application fulfils the requirements and the provided information is sufficient, clear and coherent for assessing it.

Intermediary scores
The application shows that it fulfils most of the requirements, however certain aspects are improperly presented and justified.

Minimum score
The application does not fulfil the requirements or information required is missing or is of low quality (it is not related to the addressed question, doesn't reflect the aspects required, etc)

The Selection Committee will decide, before the start of the work for the external assessors, on a unitary mechanism for the scoring of the projects to be used by all external assessors, taking into consideration the grid for Qualitative Assessment for the respective call and the provisions of the Assessment and Selection Manual approved by the MC.

The assessors must pay particular attention to clarity, consistency and appropriate level of detail and draft their comments in English language, as these comments could be used to provide feedback to applicants.

4.2.4. Request for Clarifications

In case of incomplete documentation or missing/unclear information relevant for this assessment stage, clarifications may be requested.

Only one clarification per issue may be requested, but, as a general rule, all aspects which require clarifications should be centralised in one request per each step. No additional requests for clarification on the same issue will be sent in case the lead partner fails to provide a satisfactory answer.
The external assessors shall not have any direct contact with the applicants.

The procedure to be followed is described below:

- each assessor prepares a list of needed clarifications and submits it to the SC Coordinator ;
-

The Coordinator of SC, with the support of Secretary prepares and sign the requests for clarifications and sends it to the concerned Lead Partner. In preparing the requests for clarifications the Coordinator will consider that the request for clarifications shall concern the entire partnership. -
- The request will indicate the deadline for the Lead Partner to submit its answer to the request for clarifications of no more than 5 working days calculated from the next working day following the day when the written request was sent by email to the Lead Partner.

Cases when clarifications will be requested (non exhaustive list):

- activities are foreseen outside eligible area and insufficient information is provided;
- missing data or inconsistency between the financial data included in Annex C and the ones in *the Annual accounts for the latest financial year for which the accounts have been closed at the moment of submission of the Application*
- the budget seems overestimated.

The same matters encountered in more applications shall be clarified in the same manner.

The answer to clarifications will be uploaded into JEMS and the assessors assigned for the respective application who reviews the grid, if necessary (score and/or add additional information in the "Justification" section of the criterion and then "save' the work and press "Finish checklist". After this stage, the coordinator will be able to start the quality check of the grid as mentioned in section 4.2.1.
In case the Lead partner fails to provide the information requested as clarification, the project will be assessed in the absence of the concerned information, and will be scored accordingly. The "0" score given to the eliminatory criteria, will automatically lead to the rejection of the project.
Clarifications cannot have the purpose or the effect to improve the content of the application.

Clarifications cannot have the purpose or the effect to improve the content of the application. Clarifications answers submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration and will be considered as missing.

4.2.5. Consolidation of grids for Step 2

The coordinator reviews the grid and if the grid is properly filled in and no revisions are needed, the coordinator presses "consolidator options - consolidates". The "consolidated" grid can be visualised by accessing the *JeMS – Assessment ranking* tool. The *JeMS – Assessment ranking* consolidates all the scoring and related justifications of the assessors involved in Step 2 and contains the average of scores of the 2 assessors.

The grids cannot be consolidated if they are not "finished" by the assessors.
The consolidated grid (PDF format) will be uploaded in JeMS in the "Attachments" section by the coordinator as well as any version of the individual grids justifying the Coordinator to "RETURN BACK TO ASSESSOR" for reviewing his/her assessment saved in PDF format.

If revisions on the grid or correlation between assessors are needed (in case of insufficient explanations, or missing justification, or in case of discrepancies, as described below), the coordinator presses "return back to assessor". The assessor has to review, as the case. The grid is displayed as "draft", with no date. After revision, assessor press "save changes" and then "finish checklist".

Based on the consolidated grid, the coordinator prepares the Quality Assessment Report which shall be discussed by the Selection Committee.

Then, the coordinator, accesses "enter quality assessment", and reflect conclusion of the assessment, as follows:

- Project is recommended for funding

- Project is recommended with condition
- Project not recommended for funding

Then presses “submit quality assessment” and “confirm”.

If matters not covered by the present Guidelines occur during any of the 2 assessment steps, the assessors shall address the coordinator of the assessment process proposing a solution. The approach used shall be reflected in the respective Assessment Report.

4.2.6. Approach in case of discrepancies between the assessors

Cases of discrepancies which require correlation between the assessors or re-assessment:

a) the total scores given by the initial two assessors diverge by more than 10 points and they are above the threshold for overall admissibility of the application;

OR

b) the total scores given by the initial two assessors diverge and only one of the total scores is above the threshold for overall admissibility of the application;

OR

c) for *Strategic Assessment* criteria the awarded scores of one assessor do not surpass the minimum required threshold whilst the awarded scores of the other assessor is above the minimum required threshold.

in case of discrepancies that persist after a revision done by the two assessors at the request of Coordinator, the Coordinator will present the concerned cases to the Selection Committee, that may decide for a re-assessment to be carried out by another assessor assigned by the coordinator. When a re-assessment is carried out, the final score will be calculated as the average of the score by the third assessors and the closest score given by one of the first two assessors.
The matter will be reflected in the Quality Assessment Report.

4.2.7. Elaboration of Quality Assessment Report

Following the consolidation of the grids, the coordinator of the SC draws up a preliminary **Assessment Report for Step 2** containing at least:

- the list with proposed applications for selection, ranked per Specific objective according to the average scores received, until reaching the funding limit under each Specific objective under the call..
- If several proposals will be awarded the same overall score at the end of Step II, 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:
  a) the score awarded at section A 2 Cooperation character
  b) the score awarded at section A3. Project intervention logic
  c) the score awarded at section B2 . Budget
- The projects having an overall score of at least 70 points will be included on a reserve list.
- a list with the rejected applications ranked per specific objective according to the average scores received.

The Report and its annexe(s) will be submitted to the members of the SC for consideration, prior to the meeting of the SC.

4.2.8. Meeting of the Selection Committee

Based on the results of the Quality Assessment, the SC meets in order to:

- review the provisional results of the assessment process before submission of MC;
- discuss any particular case occurred during the assessment process;
- identify possible solution(s) for any potential controversial matter prior to the submission of the Final Assessment Report to MC.

During the meeting, the following rules shall apply:

- SC shall not change the assessors' scores or recommendations;
- SC shall not alter the grids completed by the assessors.

A minute of the discussions and conclusions of the SC will be attached to the Quality Assessment Report.

4.2.9 Double-funding verification

JS assesors shall assure that specific checks to avoid double funding will be carried out during the evaluation stage of the project proposals (after quality assessment).

Double-funding verification will be done by JS assessors on projects that are proposed to be selected or are included on the reserve list following the quality assessment. To this purpose, access rights into databases of the Black Sea Basin and Romania-Hungary programmes or into other databases shall be granted by the Managing Authority.

The double-funding verification will have in view the partners, objectives and activities for which financing has been requested in the framework of nterreg NEXT-VI A Romania-Ukraine 2021-2027.

Provided that double funding is identified in case of one or more projects, the SC will be requested to analyse the respective cases and to revise the list of selected projects or the reserve list, or formulate recommendations as regards certain activities needing to be taken into consideration by the Lead partner the during contracting stage. Decisions shall be reflected in the Quality Assessment Report approved by SC.

4.2.10. MC Approval of the Final Assessment Report

After double-funding verifications are completed, in maximum 5 working days from the SC approval of the final version of the Quality Assessment Report from the end date of the SC meeting, the coordinator will submit to the MC for approval the Final Assessment Report that comprises the Admissibility Report and the final Quality Assessment Report approved by SC .

The MC members will receive JeMS access rights for visualizing the applications and the assessment grids for all projects prior to approving the Final Assessment Report and will be requested to verify that, to the best of their knowledge and in the limit of their competences,

the objectives, activities, deliverables of project proposed for financing have not been already funded (potential double funding) by EU Programme(s) or other sources/ programmes.

Provided that double funding is identified in case of one or more projects, the MC may decide to revise the list of selected projects or the reserve list, or formulate recommendations as regards certain activities needing to be taken into consideration by the Lead partner the during contracting stage.

The MC will issue a decision concerning the approval of the list of the applications recommended for financing, the reserve list, the amounts granted to them and the list of rejected projects.
The final MC decision ("Funding decision") is reflected in JeMS by the coordinator:

- Project is approved for funding;
- Project is approved with condition (Reserve list);
- Project is not approved for funding.

Then press "submit funding decision" and "confirm".

4.2.11 JeMS steps to be followed - STEP 2

1	Access the "Assessment" button – Enter quality assessment. Access Quality Assessment
2	Analyse the application and its annexes
3	In case clarifications is/are needed, consolidated (by the coordinator) clarifications is/are sent to the applicant. In case no clarification is required or after receiving answers to clarifications, assessors score each criteria and as soon as no other comments are needed to be added, assessors press button "save" and "Finish checklist". From this stage assessors cannot modify the grid until returned from the "coordinator".
4	Coordinator verifies correlation between the scores and comments of the assessors. If revisions are required, coordinator "return back to assessor". The assessor reviews and fills in the grid, press button "save changes" and "Finish checklist". If OK and no discrepancies between the comments, the coordinator presses "consolidator options - consolidates".
5	The coordinator accesses "enter quality assessment", reflects conclusions of the assessment, as follows: - Project is recommended for funding - Project is recommended with condition (equivalent of the reserve list) - Project not recommended Then press "submit quality assessment" and "confirm".
6	Coordinator elaborates the preliminary Quality Assessment Report and uploads it in JeMS; SC access report
7	

	•Meeting of the SC – access in JeMS to all eligible projects SC approves the (preliminar) Quality Assessment Report
8	•Double-funding verifications If double funding is identified, SC revises and approves the Quality Assessment Report in final version
9	•MC access the Final Assessment Report in JeMS MC checks on potential double-funding
10	MC access Report in Jems, meets and takes Decision
11	Following MC Decision, the Coordinator accesses: - **For Step 2**: "Funding decision" - the Coordinator reflects decision: ➢ Project is approved for funding; ➢ Project is approved with condition (Reserve list); ➢ Project is not approved for funding. Then press "submit funding decision" and "confirm".

In case of complaints, the complaint procedure described in Section 5 "Complaints" of these Guidelines shall be followed.

4.2.11. Provisional timeframe for Step 2

9 weeks	1 week	1 week	2 weeks
Quality Assessment of applications +Clarifications Requests + Applicants Clarifications Answers + Processing Clarifications Answers + Reviewing assessment grids Double funding verification	The coordinator of the assessment process - confirmation of the assessment grids (quality check of assessment grids) + Preparing Report/ revise Report, if the case, after double funding verifications	SC Meeting	MC checks on double-funding approval of the Final Assessment Report + Notify applicants on the results of the assessment process, including the reasons for rejection

5. COMPLAINTS

Applicants that considers that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during any step of the selection process may file an appeal.
An appeal is considered legitimate if the Applicant (Lead partner) can substantiate that the decision of the Monitoring Committee clearly infringes the provisions of the Guidelines for the concerned Call for proposals.

The Applicant should substantiate its complaints by arguing why the decision of the MC infringes the provisions of the present Guidelines for Applicants or other applicable rules.

In order to be accepted, complaints must meet the compliance requirements mentioned in the Guidelines for Applicants:

- Be submitted in writing or online, in English language, by letter signed / electronically signed and stamped according to the relevant legal provisions in force by the legal representative of the Lead partner. Appeals submitted by partners or by third parties will be rejected.
- Clearly describe the infringement considered as being made by the Monitoring Committee, and make clear references to the corresponding provisions of the Guidelines for the present Call for proposals and to the information provided through the notification announcing the result of the concerned evaluation step;
- Indicate the registration number of the project which is the subject of the appeal;
- Be submitted via e-mail within 10 calendar days from the date when the written notification announcing the result of the evaluation has been sent by Joint Secretariat following the decision of the Monitoring Committee.

The complaints that do not respect cumulatively these criteria will not be taken into consideration.

The complaint will be analysed by the Selection Committee, which has maximum 10 working days to solve the complaint calculated from the next working day following the deadline for complaint submission.

CAUTION!

The Selection Committee will not re-evaluate the application, but shall only check if all the procedures established in the Guidelines for Applicants and in the assessment and selection manual have been respected.

After analysing the complaint, the Selection Committee members will draw up a report in 5 calendar days and submit it for the MC in order to issue a decision. The decision will be taken in maximum 5 calendar days from the date of receiving the examination report from the Selection Committee.

The MC decision shall be communicated to the applicant by the Coordinator, with the support of Secretary within 3 working days following the date of the decision by the MC.

The MC decision is final, binding on all parties, and is not the subject of subsequent complaint procedures under the Program, based on the same reasons.

In the event that the Selection Committee conclusion is that the procedure has not been respected and it accepts the complaint as grounded, the Coordinator informs the management of the MA, who will make a proposal with measures to be taken for the MC.

6. REVERTING AN APPLICATION

Following the MC decision to approve a complaint, the respective application will be reverted, providing the possibility of repeating the A&E Check or Quality Assessment:

1. **Change of eligibility status (Step 1)**

In case the project status changes to "eligible", the coordinator presses "Revert Decision back to submitted", then, after re-assessment:

- "Enter eligibility Decision",
- "Submit eligibility decision" and
- "Confirm".

JeMS allows project to enter Step 2 of the assessment.

2. **Change of decision following Step 2**

In case following MC decision of the Complaint Committee report there are changes of the status – "Revert Decision back to eligible", then, after re-assessment:

- "Project is approved for funding", or
- "Project is approved with condition", or
- "Project is not approved for funding".

Then press "submit funding decision" and "confirm".

CAUTION!
Only the JeMS Administrator or Coordinator will have the right to revert an application!

After analysing the conclusion of the reassessment, the Selection Committee members will draw up a report in 5 calendar days and submit it for the MC in order to issue the final decision. The decision will be taken in maximum 5 calendar days from the date of receiving the revised report from the Selection Committee.

The MC decision shall be communicated to the applicant by the JS within 3 working days following the date of the decision by the MC.

The MC decision is final, binding on all parties, and is not the subject of subsequent complaint procedures under the Program, based on the same reasons.

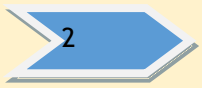
JeMS STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED

1

In case following MC decision there are changes of the status:
STEP 1 – "Revert Decision back to submitted", then
- Enter eligibility Decision", then
- Submit eligibility decision" and 'confirm"

STEP 2 - "Revert Decision back to eligible", then:
- "Project is approved for funding", or
- "Project is approved with condition", or
- "Project is not approved for funding".

Then press "submit funding decision" and "confirm".



After all these steps, Section “Assessment and Decision” in JeMS will display the results of the assessment (initial and the result (decision) following complaints).

Annexes

Annex 1 Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality

Annex 2 Declaration regarding the conflict of interest