Good quality project preparation

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Interreg
South Baltic

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Overview of project selection and assessment

The assessment process

1st step	Admissibility check	Eligibility check
2nd step	Quality assessment	State aid assessment
Final step	Consolidated assessment	

Quality assessment criteria - projects

- Strategic criteria:
  - Project relevance;
  - Cooperation character;
  - Project intervention logic;
  - Partnership relevance;
  - Horizontal criteria.
- Operational criteria:
  - Work plan;
  - Communication;
  - Budget;
- Plus checking the relevance of the application to be labelled as operation of strategic importance.

Evaluation scale

- **4 – excellent**: The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. The provided information is clear and coherent. Any shortcomings are minor.

- **3 – good**: The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

- **2 – adequate:** The proposal addresses the criterion to a sufficient level, but some aspects have not been met fully or are not explained in full clarity or detail.

- **1 – insufficient:** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are serious shortcomings and/or the provided information is of low quality.

- **0 – poor:** The criterion is inadequately addressed by the proposal, or the required information is missing.

Consolidated assessment – points

CRITERION	POINTS RECEIVED			AVERAGE OF POINTS RECEIVED	WEIGHT	CONSOLIDATED POINTS
	Assessor 1	Assessor 2	Assessor 3			
Project relevance	2	2	1	1.67	20%	0.33
Cooperation Character	1	1	1	1.00	20%	0.20
Project intervention logic	2	3	3	2.67	10%	0.27
Partnership relevance	2	3	2	2.33	15%	0.35
Horizontal criteria	2	2	2	2.00	5%	0.10
Work plan	1	2	2	1.67	10%	0.17
Communication	2	3	3	2.67	10%	0.27
Budget	2	3	2	2.33	10%	0.23
SUM:					**100%**	**1.92**

Thresholds:

1. **Sum** of consolidated points: **2 or higher**
2. **Average of points** received in the **strategic criteria** Project relevance, Cooperation character, Project intervention logic, Partnership relevance: **higher than 1**
3. **Average of points** received in strategic criterion **Horizontal criteria**: **higher than 2**

The assessment criteria

Admissibility criteria

- The **Application Form attached with the Supplementary Application Form** submitted in the WOD2021electronic system (CST2021) within the set deadline.
- **All obligatory annexes** are submitted in the electronic system (e.g., Project Partner Declarations, Declaration of compliance with the DNSH principle, Letters of Commitment).
- The annexes to the Application Form are signed, where necessary, by the **authorised signatories**.
- The Application Form and all annexes are compiled **in English**.
- Project is **assigned to Programme Priority**, its Measure contributes to at least one Programme **obligatory output** and relevant to this output's **result indicator**.
- **Co-financing is secured**, in line with the Programme thresholds and project Application Form.

- Significant inconsistencies were checked.

Eligibility criteria

- The **lead partner** is an eligible organisation.
- All **project partners** are eligible organisations.
- The project fulfils the **minimum requirements for partnership** (at least 2 eligible partners from the Programme Area from 2 different Member States).

Admissibility and eligibility check - mistakes

- Supplementary Application Form is not delivered.
- A project partner is not an eligible organisation, highly relevant for SMEs and NGOs.
- Different signatories on documents and in SAF.
- Wrong financial amounts.
- Relevant documents are not delivered.

Project relevance

- Project addresses common territorial challenge or opportunity.
- Project answers real needs of the target groups.
- Project is in line with the addressed Programme Measure.
- Project matches the focus of the call (if any).
- Building on existing practices.
- Avoiding overlaps and replications with other projects.
- Going beyond existing practices.
- Contributing to strategies.

Project relevance – most common mistakes

- Not in line with the selected Programme Measure.
- Too general focus.
- Target groups or their needs are not identified.
- The project is not examined in the context of already implemented projects.
- The project is not linked to strategies.

Cooperation character

- Cross-border approach is demonstrated and justified.
- Project outcomes cannot be achieved without cooperation.
- Clear benefit for the partnership, target groups and for the Programme Area as such.
- Cooperation criteria are fulfilled:
  - Joint development;
  - Joint implementation;
  - Joint staffing;
  - Joint financing.

Cooperation character – most common mistakes

- Cross-border approach and/or relevance is weak.
- Not balanced territorial focus.
- Local character of project activities.
  - Mirroring activities instead of real cooperation.
  - Especially in case of infrastructural investments.
- Cooperation criteria are not fulfilled.
  - Some partners have budget and are active in limited number of WPs only.

Project intervention logic

- Intervention logic is clearly defined and consistent.
- Project objective is specific, realistic and achievable.
- Contribution to Programme output and result indicators.
- Quantification is sufficient, realistic and in line with the Programme rules.
- Outputs are durable.
- Outputs are replicable.

Project intervention logic – most common mistakes

- Project objective is too general.
- Outputs are not in line with the Programme provisions (Annex 7):
  - Pilots without testing character;
  - Joint development/implementation is not demonstrated;
  - Solutions are not aiming at activating stakeholders;
  - Solutions are fragmented;
  - Not clear and/or correct quantification.
- Taking up or upscaling (RCR104) the solutions (RCO116) is not clear.
- Durability is not sufficient.

Partnership relevance

- Relevant actors are involved.
- Balanced with respect to the levels, sectors, territory.
- Partners complement each other.
- Experience and competence.
- Capacity to implement the project.
- Roles of partners are clearly explained.

Partnership relevance – most common mistakes

- Relevance of the partnership is weak:
  - Important sectors are not represented in the partnership.
  - Many partners with similar profile.
- Partnership is not balanced from the territorial point of view.
- A project partner contributes to only to a limited number of activities.
- Unclear roles of PPs.

Horizontal criteria

- Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities:
  - Analysis of barriers and needs of groups at a risk of discrimination;
  - Project activities shall not result in discrimination;
  - Project activities and outputs are accessible to anyone.

- Gender equality:
  - Equal opportunities between men and women;
  - Messages free from gender stereotypes, gender-sensitive language.

- Sustainable development:
  - Sustainable development at the stages of its preparation, implementation and use of project outputs;
  - In line with the environmental protection requirements arising from applicable EU and national law.

Horizontal criteria – most common mistakes

- Neutral contribution is declared.
- Not all criteria are considered comprehensively.
- Data and analysis on barriers are not presented.
- Only general statements.
- Specific actions are not planned.

Work plan

- Activities and deliverables are relevant to the proposed outputs and results.
- Appropriate task distribution between partners.
- Realistic time plan.
- Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical sequence.
- Infrastructural investments are justified and have cross-border character.
- Sound project management approach.
- Quality management.
- Risk mitigation.

Work plan – most common mistakes

- (Some) activities do not aim at delivering project outputs and results.
- Shared LP responsibilities.
- Too general descriptions.
- Deliverables:
  - Overlap with outputs.
  - Not relevant for monitoring the progress of implementation.
- Communication activities consist a separate WP.
- Timetable is not logical.
- Lack of joint approach.
- Missing information on infrastructural investments.
- Quality management and risk mitigation are not planned.

Communication

- Communication objectives, target groups, activities and tools are relevant and contribute to achieving the overall objective of the project.
- Communication plan is realistic.
- Transferring solutions.
- Target groups are involved into project activities.

Communication – most common mistakes

- Objectives are not specific.
- No difference between the beginning and end of the project.
- Actions do not aim on actively involving the target groups.
- Communication activities are planned in a separate WP.
- Too general information and activities.
- Quantification of the target groups is not provided or too modest.
- Channels and activities are not appropriate for the target groups.
- Project and associated partners are identified and counted as target groups.

Budget

- Project demonstrates value for money.
- Sufficient and reasonable financial resources are planned.
- Budget is coherent and proportionate.
- PPs' budgets corresponds to their roles.
- Budget is appropriate in relation to the planned activities, project outputs and results.
- Budget distribution per cost category and work package is in line with the work plan.
- Costs related to external expertise and services, equipment and infrastructure and work are specified in the application.
- Lump sum is correctly planned.
- Flat rates are correctly calculated and planned.

Budget – most common mistakes

- Too high budget -> low value for money.
- Cost-sharing.
- No information on budget items in Cost Categories 4-6. Items are not justified.
- Budget is imbalanced between PPs.
- Main part of the budget is attributed to equipment and infrastructure that makes this investment the main goal of the project.
- Budget is not consistent with the work plan:
  - With the roles of PPs;
  - Over or underestimated WPs.
  - Too high costs planned for management.
- DE, DK and LT partners do not plan FLC costs.
- Flat rates for CC2 and CC3 are not correctly planned.

General mistakes

- Obligatory fields of the (S)AF are not completed.
- Too general information provided.
- Differences between SAF and WOD2021.
- Guidance messages in SAF are ignored.

Wrap-up

Cornerstones of a good application

- Have a clearly defined challenge with cross-border nature.
- Relevant and balanced partnership.
- Clear intervention logic, indicators in line with Programme provisions.
- Horizontal criteria analyse the problems and demonstrate positive contribution for all sub-criteria.

Different parts of the application are interlinked, making one mistake may have negative spill-over effects.

Other advices what (not) to do

- Prepare your project from general to detail – check eligibility criteria first, then build your idea based on real needs which will be fulfilled by the project objective and go to project outputs,

- Check if your project is in the line with the programme – not every Energy friendly project will be suitable for renewable sources, not every touristic will follow sustain tourism rules,

- Give specific and concrete info about your project at the very beginning of your application,

Other advices what (not) to do

- Use simple and concrete language. If there is 10 000 signs to fill, you don’t have to fill it all,
- Give a complete information in the AF,
- Don’t copy criteria or manual.

Key actions of project development

- Get familiar with relevant Programme provisions:
  - Programme Measure in the Cooperation Programme;
  - Programme Manual;
  - Annex 6 Project selection process and criteria;
  - Annex 7 Indicator factsheet;
  - Application guidelines.
- Follow the recommended order of steps (Manual V. / 1.1).
- Screen already implemented projects:
  - https://southbaltic.eu/
  - https://keep.eu/
- Take part in consultations (follow instructions)
- Self-assess the project with fresh eye against Annex 6.
- Check the AF in preview mode in WOD2021 before submission.

Thank you!

Máté Szalók | Project Officer | mate.szalok@southbaltic.eu

Kamila Nowicka | Project Officer | kamila.nowicka@southbaltic.eu

Interreg South Baltic

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Joint Secretariat

Plac Porozumienia Gdańskiego 1, 80-864 Gdańsk, Poland
tel. +48 58 746 38 55

southbaltic@southbaltic.eu