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NEXT MED

Evaluation procedure and criteria

First call for proposals

#everythingMEDpossible



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA
DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA
DELLA SARDEGNA



GENERALITAT
VALENCIANA
Presidencia



سلطة منطقة
الاقتصادية الخاصة
AQABA SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY



1. How the evaluation process works?



Key principles

Transparency

Equal
treatment

Non-
discrimination

Objectivity

Fair
competition

ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST SHALL BE AVOIDED!



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The evaluation process at a glance

1 stage submission / 2-step evaluation

350/400 proposals

- Administrative check
- **Operational evaluation**

About 120 proposals

- Submission of supporting documents
- Eligibility check
- **Strategic evaluation**
- Environmental check
- State aid check

About 60
projects to be approved

Step
1

Step
2

Grant
award
decision

4 months

4 months

8 months



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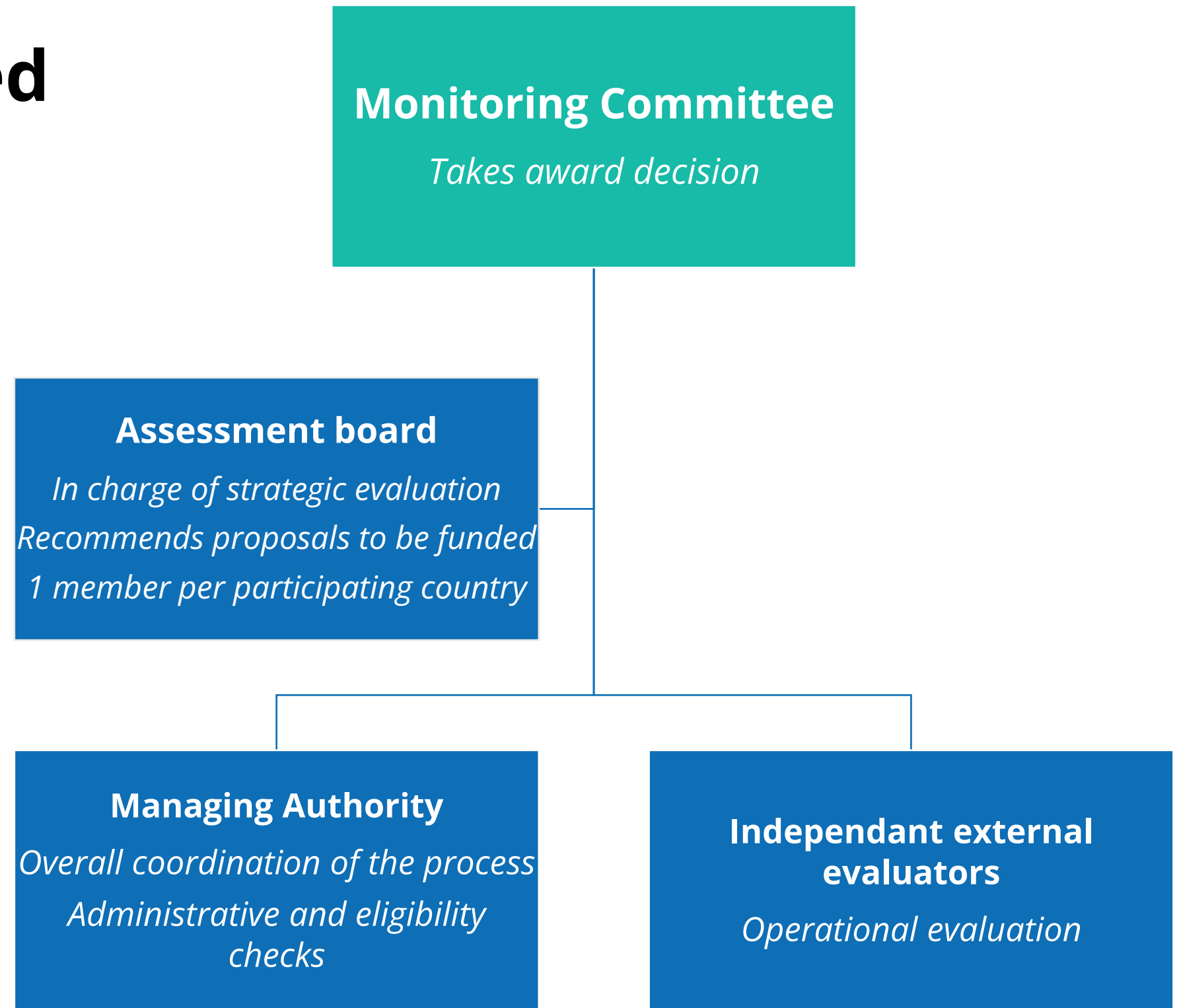


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Main actors involved



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Steps of evaluation process in details

1. Administrative check

- Each proposal is checked by two internal assessors

STEP 1

2. Operational evaluation

- Each proposal is assessed by two external independent evaluators
- Minimum quality threshold **60/88**
- Only the highest ranked proposals per Specific Objective = total EU funds corresponding to twice the budget available will be admitted to STEP 2

STEP 2

3. Strategic evaluation

- Two members of the Assessment Board assess each proposal
- **12 points max.** (RELEVANCE criteria: 'Coherence', 'Transnational dimension', 'Synergies and complementarities')

4. Eligibility check

- Internal assessors based on submitted supported documents
- Includes environmental and state aid checks (as the case may be)



2. What we evaluate?



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Evaluation criteria

EVALUATION CRITERIA	MAX. SCORE (POINTS)
RELEVANCE	28 (16 external evaluators + 12 assessment board)
QUALITY OF DESIGN	16
OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY	12
EFFECTIVENESS	16
SUSTAINABILITY	12
COST-EFFECTIVENESS	12
HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES	4
TOTAL SCORE	100



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Evaluation methodology

Each criterion will be given a score between 1 and 4 in accordance with the following rating.

0 or decimals cannot be assigned!

4

- The proposal **successfully** addresses **all** relevant **aspects** of the criterion
- Any shortcomings are assessed as minor

3

- The proposal addresses the criterion **very well**, although certain **improvements are still possible**
- Identified features demonstrate a good overall quality

2

- The proposal shows adequate features with regards to the evaluation criterion although some **notable weaknesses are detected**
- Improvements would be necessary

1

- The proposal **fails to address** the criterion under examination
- The criterion is addressed in an **inadequate manner**, or there are **serious inherent weaknesses** more important than strengths



3. Administrative check



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Tips and advice

Under ENI CBC Med Programme, a still relevant percentage of proposals **failed in this step**. The e-application form is aimed at reducing the number of applications rejected for administrative criteria, but you should:

- Devote a dedicated staff in your team to check and collect requested documents (declarations). **DON'T WAIT UNTIL LAST MINUTE!**
- Read carefully the **Programme Document and the Guidelines** and share constraints with your potential partners BEFORE the final decision on the composition of the partnership: are the potential partners in the position to provide the requested information and documents?
- **Do not** complete the partnership artificially by adding **partners that you don't know!** This usually leads to serious deficiencies and problems.



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Administrative checklist

- All requested documents duly filled in, signed, dated and on headed paper of concerned organisations
- **Missing documents** will not be requested and **will lead to the rejection of the proposal**

BEFORE SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL, PLEASE CHECK THAT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS IS COMPLETED AND RESPECTS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA FOR THE APPLICATION FORM:	To be filled in by the Applicant	
	Yes	No
ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK		
1. All requirements set out in chapter 4 are fully met by the proposal (automated checks performed by the e-form)		
2. The electronic or scanned version of the Declaration by the Applicant has been uploaded onto the online application system. It is on headed paper and/or stamped, dated and signed ¹⁵ .		
3. All requested mandatory information is included in the Declaration by the Applicant		
4. The electronic or scanned version of all the Partner Statements by the partners has been uploaded onto the system and they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- on headed paper and/or stamped;- dated;- signed.		
5. All requested mandatory information is included in the Partner Statements.		
6. If an international organisation is foreseen in the proposal, the electronic or scanned version of the International Organisation Statement(s) has/have been uploaded onto the online application system: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- on headed paper and/or stamped;- dated;- signed.		
7. All requested mandatory information in the International Organisation Statement(s) is included.		
8. For youth-oriented projects, the electronic or scanned version of the Applicant declaration on youth criteria has been uploaded onto the online application system: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- on headed paper and/or stamped;- dated;- signed.		
9. All requested mandatory information in the Applicant declaration on youth criteria is included.		
10. If associated partners are foreseen in the proposal, the electronic or scanned version of the Associated Partner(s) Statement(s) has/have been uploaded onto the online application system: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- on headed paper and/or stamped;- dated;- signed.		
11. All requested mandatory information in the Associated Partners Statements is included.		
12. The State Aid self-assessment check grid (for both Applicant and each partner).has been filled in according to the format provided by the Programme and uploaded onto the e-Form.		
13.		
14. Environmental screening: Section 3 of the e-Form is filled in (only for proposals under Programme Specific Objectives under Priority 1 and 2).		



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4. Evaluation criteria



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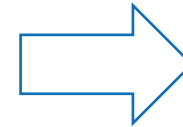
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1 - Relevance: 28/100 points (1/2)

1.1 Coherence with the Programme X 2 (section 3.1.1 e-form)

Is the proposal needed and **relevant in the context of the Interreg NEXT MED Programme**? How will the project contribute to the achievement of the Programme Priority and Programme Specific Objective under which it has been submitted?

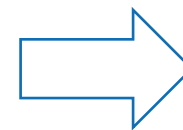


Key elements

- Added value of the proposal and **relevance in the context of the Interreg NEXT MED Programme**
- Project **contribution to the achievement of the Programme Priority and Specific Objective** under which it has been submitted
- **Consistency** with the Programme Specific Objective

1.2 Transnational dimension X 2 (section 3.1.2 e-form)

Does the proposal have a real **transnational added value**? Why is cooperation needed to achieve the project Specific Objective(s)? How relevant from a transnational point of view is the proposal to the common challenges and particular needs of the involved territories? Is the proposal likely to have tangible benefits in all concerned territories?



Key elements

- **Actual added value** for the eligible territories and how the proposal provides solutions to the common challenges and specific needs of the involved territories
- **Need of cooperation** between partners from multiple countries to achieve the project specific objective/s
- **Real transnational dimension** avoiding a mainly local/national dimension and extent of the project will have tangible benefits in all concerned territories



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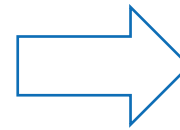


1 - Relevance (2/2)

1.3 Project beneficiaries

(section 3.1.3 e-form)

Does the proposal appropriately define **the needs of the target groups and final beneficiaries**? Are the involved target groups and final beneficiaries clearly defined, quantified, and strategically chosen?



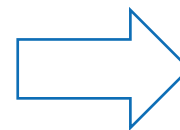
Key elements

- Clearly **identify** and **quantify** target groups and final beneficiaries. Describe their **needs** and **constraints** and their strategic selection at transnational level
- Mention if and how they were **involved in project preparation** (e.g. local actors involved starting from the project formulation to the project implementation stage)

1.4 Synergies and complementarities X 2

(section 3.1.4 e-form)

Are **synergies/complementarities with other strategies and/or initiatives** well demonstrated and likely to be exploited:



Key elements

- Strategic: **demonstrate synergies** and **complementarities** of your proposal with other **major strategies** and/or **initiatives** (ref. Doc "Overview of main policies, strategies and initiatives having synergies and complementarities with Interreg NEXT MED Programme")
- Operational: actual use of existing and scale-up of results developed by other relevant projects



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Relevance: Tips and advice

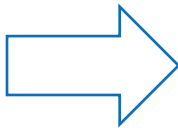
- Relevance is the evaluation section with **more weight** (28/100 points)
- Focus and highlight expected **changes**
- **Clearly explain the “Transnational”** added value: **Interreg NEXT MED is a transnational Programme**, not a development cooperation initiative. Therefore, rather than clarifying only “why the project is needed” in a given area, **focus on the need of transnational approach** to achieve the results;
- **Define, identify, quantify both** the target groups and the project beneficiaries – this criterion is essential to measure the potential impact of the whole proposal;
- Listing synergies is not enough! Explain **how you are going to use** them!



2 - Quality of design: 16/100 points (1/2)

2.1 Specific objective and expected results (section 3.2.1 e-form)

Are the project's **specific objective/s** and **expected results** clearly defined? Are they sufficiently specific, realistic and achievable? Will they lead to achieve the project Overall Objective?

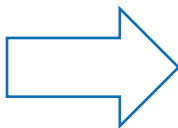


Key elements

Clearly define the **Specific Objective(s)** and **expected result(s)** using the Guide for project preparation.
Show that they are realistic, achievable and consistent with the identified **needs of the target groups and final beneficiaries**.

2.2 Outputs and activities (sections 3.2.1; 4.1; 4.3 and 4.4 e-form)

Are project **outputs** and **activities** properly designed? Will they **lead to achieve** the project **Specific Objective/s**?



Key elements

Are the outputs well **identified** and are they **relevant** to contribute to the **achievement** of the project **Specific Objective(s)** and **Expected Result(s)**
Ensure that the dimension and **number** of outputs/activities are **justified and reasonable**
Main activities shall be relevant to contribute to the **achievement** of the project **outputs**



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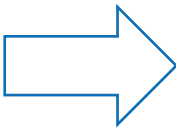
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2 - Quality of design (2/2)

2.3 Intervention logic (sections 3.2.3 and 3.1.3 e-form)

Are the projects **intervention logic** (objectives, outputs and activities) **consistent with the needs** of the target groups and final beneficiaries? In particular, is the project likely to **deliver a tangible support** to the **target groups** and **final beneficiaries**?



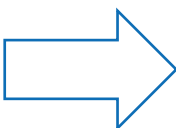
Key elements

Explain how SO/s, expected results, outputs and main activities are **consistent** with the **needs** of the **target groups** and **final beneficiaries** highlighting the **benefits** of the project towards them.

If links with the needs of target groups and final beneficiaries are not clear, you should reconsider the description given in section 3.1.3!

2.4 Indicators (section 3.2.4 e-form)

Are the **indicators** (both at Expected Result/s and outputs level) realistically quantified and achievable with the planned resources (time, partners and budget)? Are they **coherent** with the **Programme indicators**?



Key elements

Be realistic in quantifying the **indicators** (both at **expected result(s) and outputs** level) to be in line with the planned resources (time, partners and budget) and coherent with the Programme indicators target values.

Use the “PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK METHODOLOGY PAPER” for their **definition** and how to set the **target values**.



Quality of design: Tips and advice

- Successful projects think **out-of-the-box** to design their logical frameworks. **Focus on the Programme Results Indicators and Outputs Indicators** and elaborate your intervention logic with the contribution to this macrolevel in mind;
- Describe your **outputs** and consider that they **must contribute to the Programme output indicators**;
- Ensure **coherence** between **project outputs** and **expected results** within a realistic timeframe;
- Your whole strategy must be **consistent with the target groups and final beneficiaries** identified under Relevance!



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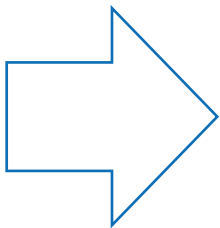
3 – Partnership and operational capacity: 12/100 points (1/2)

3.1 Experience and capacity of the Lead partner (sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.5 e-form)

Does the **Lead Partner** demonstrate the adequate experience and capacity to coordinate, manage and implement the project (financial, human resources and thematic expertise in order to ensure the involvement of the chosen stakeholders)?
Does it have **stable** and **sufficient** financial capacity to ensure the cash-flow all along the project implementation?

3.2 Experience and capacity of the project partners (sections 3.3.4 3.3.5 e-form)

Do the **partner** organisations have the **experience**, **expertise** and competence in the thematic field(s) concerned as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project (financial, human resources and capacity to ensure the **involvement** of the chosen **stakeholders**)?



Key elements

Show that the Applicant and partners have the **adequate experience, expertise, capacity** to **coordinate, manage** and **implement** the project. They should have sector experience and experience in international cooperation projects and **enough staff** to implement activities in terms of **quantity** and of **quality** (please note that information could be verified!).

Financial stability is also crucial; applicants should possess the financial capacity to maintain consistent cash flow throughout the project.

For **youth strand** proposals, please provide information on **specific experience**, expertise and **competences** in **managing** and implementing **projects for the youth**.



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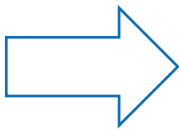
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3 – Partnership and operational capacity (2/2)

3.3 Roles and tasks (section 3.3.6 e-form)

Are the **roles and tasks** of the Lead Partner and partners clearly defined and appropriately distributed? To which extent does each partner organisation actively contribute to the implementation of the project?



Key elements

Integrating ideas, expectations, and contributions from all partners to ensure shared understanding and commitment to project goals.

Balanced task distribution among partners, each playing a crucial role in project activities, management, reporting, and monitoring.
You should demonstrate the way each partner organisation actively contributes to the implementation of the project.

Demonstrate that **each** single partner has **an actual added-value, differentiated from the others!**



Focus on Financial Capacity (1/2)

Companies

Key criteria:

- **Dependency** to grant (the entity is financially autonomous)
- **Liquidity** (it has sufficient liquidity - is able to cover its short-term commitments)
- **Debt** (the entity is solvent - capable of covering its medium and long-term commitments).
- **Operating profit rate**: there is a positive operational profit

Private companies acting as:

- **Applicant** shall **meet 3 out of the 4** criteria above in order to be funded (proposal will be rejected on this sole basis)
- **Partners** not meeting 3 out of 4 criteria will be considered at risk.

More details on the Note on the Financial Capacity



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Focus on Financial Capacity (2/2)

NGOs and non-profit organizations

Key criteria:

- **Dependency** to grant (the entity is financially autonomous)
- **Liquidity** (it has sufficient liquidity - is able to cover its short-term commitments)
- **Debt** (the entity is solvent - capable of covering its medium and long-term commitments)

Private non-profit organizations acting as:

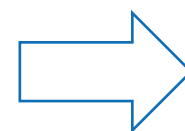
- **Applicant** shall **meet 2 out of the 3** criteria above in order to be funded (proposal will be rejected on this sole basis)
- **Partners** not meeting 2 out of 3 criteria will be considered at risk.



4 – Effectiveness: 16/100 points (1/2)

4.1 Management methodology (sections 3.4.1 + WP1 Management e-form)

Is the proposed **management and coordination methodology** clear and effective to ensure the achievement of the project objectives?



Key elements

Describe the tasks and roles of the Applicant and partners in ensuring efficient management of the project.

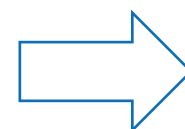
Highlight decision-making processes

Project partners shall support reporting tasks (i.e. draft of the intermediate/final reports)

Identify responsibilities for **procurement procedures**

4.2 Work Plan (sections 3.4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 e-form)

Is the **work plan** clear and feasible? Is it accurate in terms of **planned human, financial** and other resources? Is the time schedule **realistic** and does it include activities and outputs in a **logical time sequence** and **likely** to be **implemented and delivered**?



Key elements

Plan your main **activities** and **outputs** in a **clear** and **comprehensive** way! There must be a **logical time sequence** and the duration of the activities and a **realistic** and feasible delivery of outputs (proper allocation of human and financial resources)!

Projects **should extend beyond** developing guidelines, action plans, models, and strategies, and focus on their practical application.

The **actual implementation** and **testing** of **project outputs** are crucial for demonstrating their effectiveness and real-world applicability



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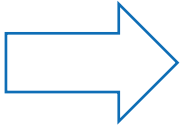


4 – Effectiveness (2/2)

4.3 Monitoring of the activities and results

(section 3.4.3 e-form)

Does the project foresee specific tools and resources to ensure a proper **monitoring** of the execution of the activities and the achievement of project objectives and results?



Key elements

Define **internal monitoring** and **evaluation procedures** and tools in line with the complexity of the partnership/project

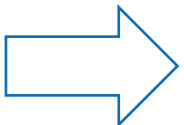
The **monitoring strategy** of the project should be adapted to the work packages and **compatible** with the project management procedures

A **Monitoring or Evaluation Plan** is highly recommended as well as a Risk Prevention and Adaptation Plan should be foreseen (also in WP1 outputs).

4.4 Communication strategy

(section 3.4.4, WP2 Communication e-form)

Is the **communication strategy** well designed? Are the foreseen activities adequate and cost-effective to raise the awareness of the target groups, media and general audience?



Key elements

Choose clear **communication purpose(s)**: raise awareness, disseminate knowledge, change behavior or mindset, showcase impact and benefits, engage with people, etc.

Define **target groups** precisely (e.g., municipal water management officials, environmental journalists, NGOs).

Bringing **positive, impactful and transformative, human-focused stories** connected to the most pressing challenges of our time: create emotional connections

Include a detailed communication plan as a WP output.

Employ a **mix of online and offline tools** for maximum visibility: website, social media, use of influencers, media relations, public relations (events) and production of materials (printed, digital, audio-visual), thematic campaigns.

Consider **paid advertisements and AI tools** for enhanced reach and content creation.



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Effectiveness: Tips and advice

- Poor project design means worse project management; define a **simple but effective** structure to manage your project and **effective rules for decision-making involving all project partners**;
- Who is in charge for timely reporting? **Golden rule for your PPs: no timely reporting = no money!**
- Identify the **PPs/staff in charge of the different Work Packages**, able to support reporting task, responsible for **procurement procedures**. Limited attention to this task may severely delay project implementation;
- Describe the **internal monitoring arrangements foreseen**, who is in charge and how the monitoring influences the decision-making system;
- Identify (or define the profile to hire) the mandatory staff to be appointed at Lead Partner level as per the requirement of the Programme: **Project Coordinator, Financial Coordinator and Communication Manager** (relevant and demonstrated experience to ensure smooth management and implementation of demanding and complex Mediterranean transnational cooperation projects, senior level – 5+ years recommended)



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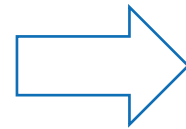


5 – Sustainability: 12/100 points (1/2)

5.1 Sustainability (section 3.5.1 e-form)

To which extent is the proposed project **sustainable**:

- **financially**
- **technically**
- **at policy/institutional level**
- **environmentally** (where applicable)



Key elements

- **Financially:** explain how the results will be financed and maintained after the end of the project
- **Technically:** how the “ownership” and use of the results of the project will be supported after the project life
- **At policy level:** will the project lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc. Commitment of public institutions in adopting project results
- **Environmentally** (where applicable) will the project generate positive environmental externalities?



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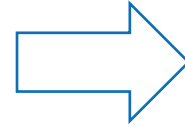
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5 – Sustainability (1/2)

5.2 Significant contribution and long-term impact (section 3.5.2 e-form)

Is the proposal likely to provide a significant and **durable contribution** to addressing the challenges targeted by the project? Is the project results and outputs likely to have a long-term impact far beyond the project lifetime?

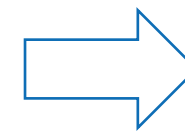


Key elements

Indicate any **strategy** or **actions** to guarantee the **long-term impact** of the project results in a **realistic** approach. Partnership should demonstrate to have the **means to ensure the long-run impact** of the project after its end: will the project structurally and permanently solve a problem?
Project beneficiaries should **still benefit** from the results once the project is over with the indication of the time length.

5.3 Applicability and replicability (section 3.5.3 e-form)

Are the project main outputs **applicable and replicable** by other organisations/regions/countries outside the current partnership? Does the project foresee specific actions to transfer and upscale the main outputs?



Key elements

Include a **strategy/action to encourage the applicability and replicability** of the project results in other geographical areas, other sectors or sub-sectors, etc.: focus on easily replicable and ready-to-use outputs.
Explain strategy to transfer the results of the project to other stakeholders. The project results should not be considered as an ending point but as a milestone towards developing valuable tools and approaches to better addressing a certain issue.



Sustainability: Tips and advice

- In ENI CBC MED, most projects reached a **poor or regular score** on Sustainability. There is room for improvement and better scores!
- Consider the project as a "seed fund" to **create** an **enabling ecosystem** and initiate lasting **positive change at the territorial level**.
- Don't tell us that the results will be further exploited ! Include **transfer of infrastructure management**, continuation of **key activities**, seeking **additional funding**, and integrating successful practices into the toolbox of public authorities, stakeholders, and communities.
- Don't leave the sustainability process for the implementation phase! The sustainability of your project results must be considered **from the very beginning!**

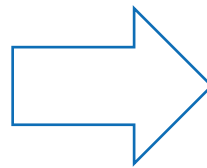


6 – Cost-effectiveness: 12/100 points (1/2)

6.1 Project budget

(section 3.6.1 and 5 - budget for the project and financial plan)

Does the project budget appear **realistic, consistent and proportionate** to the proposed work plan, project outputs and project's contribution to Programme indicators aimed for? Is the budget transparent and well-designed?



Key elements

Project overall budget should be sound. logical, justified, realistic:

- Explain how the budget has been elaborated, on which premises.
- **Clear link** between the **budget planning** and the **project strategy**
- Budgeted costs must be **justified, clearly explained** and **referred to the proposed activities!**
- **Avoid unjustified, or “artificial” costs** that do not seem to be justified by the activities and outputs
- Specific budget lines (external services, equipment, infrastructure) shall be **supported by relevant justifications**



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* Maximum number of partners and well-balanced North-South and East-West recommended

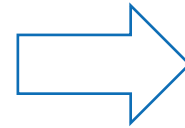


6 – Cost-effectiveness (2/2)

6.2 Ratio and balance of project costs vs expected results

(sections 3.6.2, 5 - budget for the project and financial plan and 4.2)

Is the **ratio and balance** between the **estimated costs** and the **quantification of the expected results** satisfactory? Is the need for engaging external expertise justified? Are the costs necessary and properly justified?



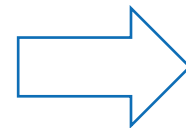
Key elements

- **Value for money** - the total budget should be **reasonable** compared with the proposed project (activities, outputs and expected results) and the size of the partnership
- **Human costs shall be realistic** and proportionate to the activities: no artificial duplication of management functions
- The foreseen budget for the different budget lines shall be **consistent with** the description of the **work packages and summary of activities**
- The main **sub-contracted costs shall be justified to** exclude that the partners can perform the tasks sub-contracted. The bulk of the project activities cannot be sub-contracted!

6.3 Budget allocation

(sections 3.6.3, 5 - budget for the project and financial plan - and 4.2)

Is the **budget properly allocated** during the time and among partners? Is it logically distributed along the duration of the project to ensure the timely delivery of the outputs and the management of the project cash-flow? Is the budget sufficiently well distributed among partners?



Key elements

- Provide evidence that the budget is **properly allocated to each PP** in relation with the activities to be implemented
- The budget **per year shall consistent with the action plan**
- The distribution by **Cost Category shall be** consistent with the project objectives, avoiding artificially inflated Cost Categories
- The main part of activities, and in particular the pilots, shall be foreseen **during the first half** of the project"
- Explain how to face any **risk of cash shortage** which may affect the timely delivery of the outputs.



Cost-effectiveness: Tips and advice

- Project designers tend to overestimate project budget!
- Compute human resources allocation according to a “reasonable” balance with project activities and their duration. Keep in mind that under the Interreg NEXT MED Programme, **only ONE major amendment is allowed in project life time;**
- Allocate **financial resources** in relation to **outputs and in accordance with the contribution given by the** partners;
- Keep in mind the **ratio** between **project cost and expected impact;**
- Don't use 'a one size fits all' approach! The only correct budget distribution is the one is **consistent with the contribution of each partner** to the outputs/activities;
- Consider the **rule of min. 50%** of total eligible costs for the MPC from the moment you start building your partnership and budget.



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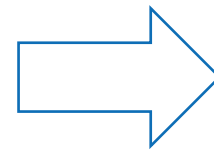
7 – HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES (4 POINTS)

7.1 Horizontal principles

(section 3.7 e-form)

To what extent does the proposal take into account (the relevant) **horizontal principles** and will ensure the compliance, during the implementation phase, with:

- respect of fundamental rights
- promotion of gender equality
- prevention of discrimination including accessibility for people with disabilities
- promotion of sustainable development
- compliance with the “do no significant harm” principle (where applicable)
- promotion of the New European Bauhaus key principles, meaning support to projects that are sustainable, aesthetic and inclusive (where applicable)



Key elements

The project shall indicate **how it has taken into account** the horizontal principles **when conceiving** the proposal and specific project activities.

You should **refer to the specific outputs** which may be relevant for any of the horizontal principles.

Indicate any **strategy or action to avoid** any type of discrimination (gender, race, etc.) or negative impact (environment, climate, aesthetics, etc.).



5. Eligibility check



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Supporting documents needed for the eligibility check

Upon request of the Managing Authority, only for short-listed project proposals:

- Statutes or articles of association of the applicant and the partner organisations proving their legal status
- Composition of the Management Board (verify signing powers and specific criterion for youth-oriented projects)
- Partnership Agreement signed by the Applicant and all partners
- External audit report on Applicant's and partners' annual accounts for the last 2 financial years (not applying to public administrations, public bodies and international organisations)

If the Applicant or a partner proves to be ineligible, the whole proposal will be rejected on this sole basis.





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