



Guidelines for Assessors

Assessment of concept notes and applications
submitted under

1st Call for Proposals

**Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation
Programmes
Territorial Cooperation Programme
Azerbaijan - Georgia**

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1 INTRODUCTION

This guide is based on the Practical Guide (PRAG) and in particular its Chapter 6 and related annexes.

The purpose of this document is to guide assessors on how to conduct their evaluations so that all assessments are made in a coherent and consistent way.

It is recalled that the evaluation committee has to base its decisions on the individual assessments of the assessors and therefore needs to ensure compliance with the criteria defined in the call for proposals and that these are commonly understood and applied by all assessors, whether they be internal to the European Commission (based in EU Delegations or at headquarters) or external (external experts).

To this end, all assessors should independently from each other carry out the assessment of the proposals assigned to them in a consistent manner by applying the same methodology, interpretation and understanding of the objectives and criteria described in the guidelines for applicants. This does not necessarily mean that the scores of two different assessors are expected to be identical, but rather that each assessor applies the same standards and provides a well substantiated opinion supporting his/her individual scores. This may be achieved by applying the following standards and good practices.

Before starting the examination of the proposals (concept note or full application), all assessors must familiarise themselves with the following documents:

- The present guidelines for assessors;
- The guidelines for applicants responding to this call for proposals, available at:
<http://eaptc-ma.eu/en/page/cat/2/azerbaijan---georgia/>, including the annexes and eventual FAQs
- Chapter 6 of the Practical Guide 2015: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/previousVersions.do>
- Joint Operational Programme for Azerbaijan – Georgia available at:
<http://www.eaptc.eu/en/program/view-azerbaijan-georgia.html>
- ENPI REGIONAL EAST PROGRAMME STRATEGY PAPER 2010-2013 & INDICATIVE PROGRAMME 2010-2013
- COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 22.11.2013 on the ENPI East Regional Action Programme 2013 Part II to be financed from the general budget of the European Union with ANNEX 8 - Action Fiche for the Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes

2 OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES FOR THIS ALL FOR PROPOSALS

Assessors must familiarise themselves with the documents related to the call for proposals. The information below refers to certain key points but does not substitute a thorough reading of e.g. the guidelines for applicants, their annexes and the FAQs published for the call.

2.1 Specific background

The Joint Communication ‘A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood’¹ highlights cross border cooperation between the EaP countries as one of the instruments to tackle economic disparities between regions and raise the quality of life across the area in a sustainable manner. Territorial cooperation between the EaP countries complements bilateral and regional development programmes (including pilot regional

¹ COM(2011) 303 final, 25.5.2011.

development programmes, PRDPs), which promote a strategy-based, inclusive approach to reduce economic and social regional disparities and realise the regional (hence national) economic potential. In the Joint Declaration of the Warsaw Eastern Partnership (EaP) summit of 29-30 September 2011², the participants acknowledged multilateral cooperation and recalled that the EaP could help develop closer ties between the partner countries themselves.

The ENPI Regional East Programme Strategy Paper 2010-2013 and Indicative Programme 2010-2013 identify territorial cooperation in partner countries as one of the sub-priorities of the Priority Area 2 “Economic Development”. In this context, a total of EUR 17.5 million has been allocated to the EaP Territorial Cooperation Programmes. Two components are envisaged: 1) The Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Support Programme (EAPTC), a technical assistance programme (EUR 5 million) launched in November 2012 to strengthen the capacity of local and regional state and non-state actors along the Ukraine-Belarus, Ukraine-Moldova, Georgia-Armenia, and Georgia-Azerbaijan borders to develop and implement cross-border projects; and 2) The Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

The Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programmes will largely build on the experience of the ENPI cross border cooperation (CBC) programmes implemented along the EU external borders in what concerns focusing on local development needs as well as thematic coverage. A distinctive feature – and novelty for the EaP region – of these programmes lies in the fact that the interventions will support the creation of genuine, effective and operational cooperation between border regions of the EaP countries only, whereas ENPI CBC always include an EU Member State as one of the partners.

The territorial cooperation programme between Azerbaijan and Georgia is carried out in the following eligible areas:

- Azerbaijan: Ganja-Qazakh and Sheki-Zagatala economic zones
- Georgia: Kakheti and Kvemo-Kartli (mkhare)

The expected results of Eastern Partnership territorial cooperation are as follows:

- An established cooperation pattern between the participating countries;
- Cooperation between local authorities, communities and CSOs in the eligible border regions of the EaP countries’ is increased;
- The capacity of local and regional authorities in the EaP countries to effectively participate in EU-funded programmes is strengthened.

The implementation of the Programme is overseen by a Joint Decision Making Committee (JDMC) composed of representatives of both participating countries' institutions and civil society. The JDMC is also responsible for selecting projects to be financed under the Programme.

The JDMC is assisted by a Technical Secretariat (TS) based in Tbilisi (Georgia) and a TS antenna located in Ganja (Azerbaijan). The TS is the administrative body responsible for the day-to-day management of the Programme including support and advice to grant beneficiaries.

This action, with the objective of promoting sustainable territorial cooperation between the border regions of the EaP countries to support their social and economic development is implemented in indirect centralised management by a Member States agency, GIZ, in accordance with Article 54(2)(c) of Financial Regulation 1605/2002.

Acting as Managing Authority for the Eastern Partnership Territorial Programmes, GIZ is responsible for launching calls for proposals as well as evaluating those proposals. It also acts as Contracting Authority concluding and managing contracts, carrying out payments, and recovering sums due.

The overall objective of the territorial cooperation programme Azerbaijan – Georgia is to strengthen cross border contacts between local authorities, communities and civil society organisations to help develop joint solutions to common social and economic development challenges.

² Council of the European Union, 14983/11, 30.09.2011.

2.2 Specific objectives of the call for proposals

Joint actions to be financed under the territorial cooperation programme Azerbaijan - Georgia must relate to at least one of the following three operational objectives and a related priority:

- I. Improving the living conditions of local communities in the border regions through joint projects supporting economic and social development
- II. Addressing common challenges in the fields of environment, employment, public health and any other field of common interest having a cross border dimension
- III. Culture, education and sports

Specific priorities

Specific priorities to be addressed under each objective are:

Objective 1

- a) Development of cross-border synergies in agriculture and related economic sectors
- b) Build up cross-border tourism potential

Objective 2

- a) Solving cross-border environmental problems and enhancing emergency preparedness

Objective 3

- a) Enhancing social inclusion through measures in the areas of culture, education and sports
- b) Develop links between youth of the bordering regions

3 EVALUATION

Applications submitted for the call for proposals will be evaluated to identify the best proposal which merit EU funding.

The proceedings of the evaluation exercise are confidential and all parties involved are bound to adhere to the principles of confidentiality, impartiality and no conflict of interest. The assessors must sign a declaration to this fact.

Only the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee may authorise contacts with an applicant during and after the evaluation process. This includes communications related to clarifications, the announcement of the results of each phase as well as dealing with requests for information and questions raised by any applicant about the results.

Lead applicant whose applications have not been pre- or provisionally selected will be informed about the scores obtained in the evaluation including a breakdown by section and sub-section of the evaluation grid. They may also be given the comments and justifications provided by the assessors and/or the evaluation committee.

The proposals have to be assessed alike and treated impartially on their merits following a review strictly based upon the information they contain irrespective of where they originate within the eligible territories defined in the Guidelines for Applicants and of the identity of the applicant and partners.

Assessors involved in the evaluation process are bound to the principles of confidentiality and secrecy even after the evaluation process is over.

Assessors must work individually and independently when examining a proposal and under no circumstances shall they discuss the proposals with each other or with any third party.

Assessors must not disclose the names of other assessors participating in the evaluation process.

The evaluation will be conducted home based. Assessors are not allowed to disclose any information or documents related to the evaluation of proposals to any outside parties neither on paper nor in electronic form.

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

Assessor must immediately inform the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee if she/he discovers that she/he is directly or indirectly connected with a proposal which she/he has to evaluate.

Deadlines given to Assessors for finalizing the evaluation of the assigned proposals shall be strictly met. Those assessors who do not finish their evaluation tasks within the allocated time period will be deemed not to have evaluated the proposal and such proposal will be re-allocated to other assessors.

3.1 The evaluation process

The final recommendations on the proposals are to be provided to the Joint Decision Making Committee and subsequently to the European Commission.

The Evaluation Committee will be comprised of the non-voting Chairperson, the non-voting Secretary and three voting members. The non-voting members and one voting member will be nominated by the Managing Authority, while other two voting members shall be nominated by the Joint Decision Making Committee (one from each participating country).

The role of the assessors is to carry out all or part of the detailed examination so as to assist the Evaluation Committee in its deliberations.

Internal Assessors are used for this call for proposals:

- For the administrative checks
- For the eligibility checks

External Assessors are used for this call for proposals:

- For the evaluation of concept notes and full applications

Assessors work under the supervision of the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee.

For each submission step (concept note and, in the case of restricted procedures, the full application), there is an administrative check to be carried out.

Concept notes submitted and which duly passed the administrative checks are evaluated for the relevance and design of the action, using an evaluation grid (see Annex II). As a first step, only the concept notes which receive a score of at least 30 points in the evaluation are considered for pre-selection. The final score is the arithmetical average of the scores given by the assessors.

The Secretary draws up the **first report** containing the result of the administrative checks and the concept note evaluation, ranked by score and communicates the results to the Joint Decision Making Committee. JDMC has to provide EvC with the written approval of the results presented in the report.

For the proposals that pass this check the quality of the application form is assessed using the evaluation grid (see Annex III) containing the selection and award criteria. The score for relevance is transferred from the concept note evaluation to the full application evaluation grid and is not assessed again. The final score is the arithmetical average of the scores given by the assessors.

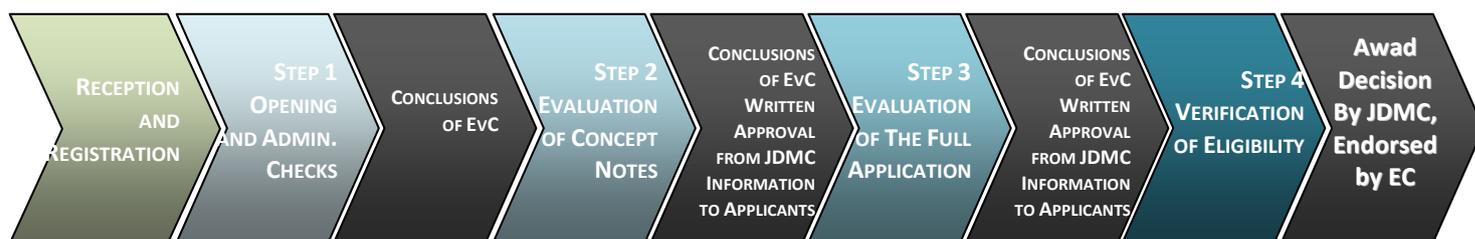
The Secretary draws up the **second report** containing the results of the evaluation of the full proposals, ranked by score. The Evaluation Committee will make a recommendation with provisionally selected proposals as well as a reserve list of applications, should additional funds become available within a defined time period. The JDMC will be informed in writing about the results of the quality check. JDMC has to provide EvC with the written approval of the results presented in the report.

For the provisionally selected proposals and those on the reserve list, an eligibility check will be undertaken on the basis of submitted supporting documents to confirm earlier statements in checklists and declarations.

The Secretary draws up the **third report** containing the results of the eligibility checks and the Evaluation Committee makes a final recommendation to the JDMC.

The final report shall be discussed and approved during the JDMC meeting, and will be communicated to the Contracting Authority asking it to seek approval by the European Commission. The final report will only be considered as valid after it is endorsed by the European Commission.

The evaluation process under this call for proposals follows the PRAG default provisions and can be described as follows:



Actors Involved in the evaluation process, are as follows:

Managing Authority (MA)/Technical Secretariat (TS) - in the evaluation and selection process acts as Contracting Authority, organises the assessment of applications, nominates the Chairperson, Secretary and one voting member of the Evaluation Committee, signs the evaluation reports.

It also provides the Evaluation Committee with the Internal Assessors used in administrative and eligibility check.

Joint Decision Making Committee (JDMC) – In the context of the evaluation process, the main task of the JDMC is to approve the conclusions provided by the EvC after each evaluation step and to take the final decision on projects to be proposed for funding and also to nominate the two voting members of the Evaluation Committee.

Evaluation Committee (EvC) – takes the decision on the selection of projects, submits evaluation reports to the JDMC for written approval and recommends the proposals to be funded to the JDMC for final decision which has to be endorsed by the European Commission. The Evaluation Committee is comprised of the following non-voting and voting members, each of them nominated by name:

Chairperson: Chairperson shall be nominated by the MA and is responsible for organising the selection process and for supervising the work of internal and external assessors and members of the EvC. The Chairperson, as a non-voting member is the only actor in this process designated to contact applicants.

Secretary: This person is also nominated by the MA and carries out all administrative and logistical functions needed to support the evaluation process.

Voting Members: One voting member shall be nominated by the MA while two others shall be nominated by the JDMC out of its official members. These two members should represent one of the participating countries each. Tasks of the voting members include the revision of the conclusions of the work done by the assessors, drawing recommendations and confirming the list of proposals recommended for funding, signing the evaluation reports and in case of substantial discrepancies (10 points or more) revealed between the scores awarded by two assessors, prepare the collective evaluation grid for the proposal concerned.

Assessors: Two types of assessors are involved under this call for proposals, **Internal Assessors** nominated from the staff of the MA and **External Independent Assessors** selected via an open call for assessors. Functions between them and to which evaluation step they are contributing to, is strictly defined in this guideline. In general, the task of both types of assessors is to support the Evaluation Committee in the assessment of the proposals in consistence with the Guidelines for Applicants.

External Independent Assessors will provide the assessment remotely (i.e. home based) and will communicate the results and other relevant issues via means of communication determined by the EvC based on concerns on safe and secure exchange of information.

The Internal Assessors might be requested to attend the meetings of the EvC if deemed necessary by the EvC members itself. Internal and External Assessors might be requested to attend the meeting of the JDMC if deemed necessary by the JDMC members itself. In such cases assessors can only present the results of their assessment and answer any questions as requested by the EvC/JDMC members.

Observers: Representatives of the European Commission will be invited to attend the Evaluation Committee meetings as observers. Observers may provide independent advice to the procedures, applying the evaluation criteria etc. However, they cannot give any opinion on the proposals.

Step 1 – Opening and Administrative Check

During the opening session applications will be given sequential reference numbers. Two lists will be drawn by the Secretary: the first containing the list of proposals having respected the deadline for submission and the second containing the list of rejected proposals due to late submission. For the further evaluation process only paper and CD-ROM copies of the application will be used while originals will be kept in the archives of the MA.

The administrative check will be conducted by Internal Assessors and at this stage only formal administrative requirements will be examined. Each proposal will be examined by one assessor only. Once the opening and the administrative check is completed the Chairperson with the support of the Secretary establishes a list of proposals having met the administrative criteria and a list where the criteria is not satisfied and submits them to the voting members of the Evaluation Committee. Copies of the administrative check grids will be also attached to the intermediate evaluation report for applications submitted within deadlines.

Step 2 and 3 – Evaluation of the Concept Note and the Full Application Forms

Evaluation of the concept notes and the full application is carried out by External Independent Assessors. Each application shall be assessed by two assessors working separately and producing their own independent assessment under the supervision of the Chairperson. The Chairperson will attribute applications to assessors matching the content of each proposal with their field of expertise.

Once the External Assessors are done with the evaluation, the Chairperson with the support of the Secretary prepares a list of proposals ranked by scores with detailed comments justifying the scores given by both assessors. The lists are submitted to the voting members of the Evaluation Committee. Copies of the grids shall be attached to the evaluation report.

Step 4 – Verification of Eligibility

After the evaluation of the full applications and once the list of provisionally selected applicants is drafted, the very final step is to check eligibility of applicant(s), therefore the provisionally selected applicants and applicants on the reserve list will be asked to provide supporting documents as defined according to the Guidelines for Applicants. The eligibility check will be carried out by Internal Assessors.

The non-eligibility of one partner implies the non-eligibility of the entire project proposal.

As with the administrative check the eligibility check is carried out by one Internal Assessor only.

3.2 Content of the evaluation

Opening and Administrative Check

For the administrative checks, the internal assessors should verify each proposal against the Checklist and the Declaration by the applicant. The criteria published in the checklist with the call may under no circumstances be modified. Assessors must fill in the assessment grid (Annex II to this guideline) following the instructions provided by the Chairperson. Each proposal needs to be checked by one assessor only. Each evaluation grid must be initialled, signed and dated by the assessor having carried out the evaluation.

The following will be verified during the administrative check:

1. The proposal was sent within the deadline (time and date) (Annex II – Assessment Grid)
2. Grant Application form used is correct and the language is the one requested under this call for proposals (Annex II – Checklist – Q1 and 3)
3. The proposal package is complete (Annex II – Checklist – Q2, 4 - 9)
4. The Lead Applicant has only submitted one application per operational objective. (Annex II – Checklist – Q10)

Failure to comply with the 1st, 2nd and 4th requirement as listed above, leads to the immediate rejection of the proposal.

In case the applicant does not comply with the 3rd requirement mentioned above, the Contracting Authority will requested to submit the missing copies or to provide the CA with the missing signatures.

In detail, following PraG (paragraph 2.8.3) provisions, proposals falling in the following situations will not be rejected: e.g. submitted with fewer copies than required; submitted with the wrong presentation but the correct templates used; proposals which have not been signed or contain a scanned signature (the signature can be requested subsequently – if not obtained, the proposal must be rejected).

The Application will be disqualified from the evaluation process in case any of the following documents is missing from the Application:

- a complete application form,
- a declaration by the applicant,
- partnership statements (co-applicant's mandate),
- budget table,
- logical framework.

When filling in the grid special attention shall be given to the provision of any comments concerning the criteria which have not been fulfilled, so that information can be easily transferred to the letters that will be sent to applicants. After completion of the check the Assessor should sign and date the check grid.

If any requested information is missing or incorrect the application will be disqualified from the evaluation process. However the Chairperson may seek clarifications if (1) such clarifications do not improve the content of the application, (2) if fewer number of copies was submitted than requested (3) proposals which have not been signed or contain a scanned signature, however if signatures are still not provided after the request the application must be rejected.

Evaluation of Concept Note and Full Application

For the evaluation of concept notes and full proposals, external assessors should write an assessment, using the published evaluation grids (see Annexes III and IV) without modification.

At least two assessors must assess each concept note and each proposal, working independently of each other. The assessors must not discuss the evaluation of specific proposals between themselves. Assessors are fully responsible to complete their evaluation grids in compliance with the quality evaluation standards described in these Guidelines and the criteria listed in the evaluation grid available.

Each application must be assessed on its own merits and not by comparing different applications. Each criterion of the evaluation grid should be evaluated only once by the assessor and should not influence the assessment of other criteria. The assessor must give concise, pertinent and well justified comments for each sub-section of the evaluation grid, in a wording that may be given directly to the Lead Applicant, if requested.

Strong and weak points must be reflected. In particular, comments should not include only a summary of the proposal, but should provide a short critical analysis in line with the respective questions of the evaluation grid. Each evaluation grid must be initialled, signed and dated by the assessor having carried out the evaluation.

Concept notes will be evaluated against relevance of the action and design of the action as described in Annex II to this guideline.

Below is the table demonstrating the questions cross referenced to the respective section from the Grant Application Form the external assessors shall refer to.

Section	Reference to the Grant Application Form
1. Relevance of the Action	
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the Call for Proposals?*	Section 1.3.1
1.2 How relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies) or region(s) is the proposal (including synergy with other EU initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	Section 1.3.2
1.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	Section 1.3.3
1.4 Does the proposal demonstrate a cross-border character? (i.e. fulfils at least one of the following criteria: (1) joint development, (2) joint implementation, (3) joint staffing, (4) joint financing)*	Section 1.3.4
2. Design of the action	
2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the action? In particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved, taking into account external factors and relevant stakeholders?	Section 1.3.1
2.2 Is the action feasible and consistent in relation to the objectives and expected results?	Section 1.3.2

Given the cross-border specificity of the programme, question 1.4 refers to the four cross-border criteria where at least one shall be applied in order the Concept Note not to get rejected (for further details on scoring please refer to the section 4.2 of this guideline).

The scores for questions 1.1 and 1.4 shall be multiplied by 2 because of their importance.

The total score for the Concept Note that has been pre-selected will be transferred into the grid for the full application.

Results of the assessment of each Concept Note shall be communicated with the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee.

The Full Application is assessed against the selection and award criteria.

Selection Criteria are intended to evaluate the technical, financial and operational capacity of the applicant and its partners in order to ensure that the partnership: has stable and sufficient financial resources to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the project is being carried out and to participate in its funding; has the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully

complete the proposed project. These criteria correspond to Section 1 of the Evaluation grid (Annex IV to this guideline).

Award criteria allow the quality of the proposals submitted to be evaluated in relation to the objectives and priorities foreseen in the call for proposals and also to the grants to be awarded for projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the Programme. These criteria enable the selection of proposals that will comply with the set objectives and priorities guaranteeing at the same time the visibility of the Community financing and of the Programme itself. These criteria correspond to sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the evaluation grid (Annex IV).

N.B. Evaluation grids shall strictly be used and cannot be modified in the application process.

The table below demonstrates the questions from the evaluation grid of the full application form cross-referenced to the respective sections of the Grant Application Form.

Section	Ref to Grant Application Form
1. Financial and Operational Capacity	
1.1 Do the applicants and, if applicable, affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient experience of project management?	3.3.1; 3.3.2; 4.1; 5.3
1.2 Do the applicants and, if applicable, affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical expertise? (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed.)	2.1.7; 2.1.8; 2.2;
1.3 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management capacity? (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)	2.1.2; 3.3.3
1.4 Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	3.3.3
2. Relevance of the action	
Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation	
3. Effectiveness and feasibility of the action	
3.1 Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?	2.1.1; 2.1.3; 2.1.5.
3.2 Is the action plan clear and feasible?	2.1.3
3.3 Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the action? Is any evaluation planned?	2.1.5
3.4 Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?	2.1.3
4. Sustainability of the action	
4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?	2.1.4
4.2 Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects? (Including scope for replication, extension and information sharing.)	2.1.4
4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?: - financially (how will the activities be financed after the funding ends?) - institutionally (will structures allowing the activities to continue be in place at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?) - at policy level (where applicable) (what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. will it lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc?)	2.1.4

- environmentally (if applicable) (will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?)	
5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	
5.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	2.1.6; 2.1.3
5.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?	2.1.6; 1.3.1; 2.1.1

When assessing the Concept Note and the Full Application please pay attention to the following issues

- 1) The size and composition of the partnership must be derived from project objectives and activities.
- 2) When assessing the experience also take into consideration that the Guideline for Applicants requires an Applicant to be registered at least one year before the call was launched.
- 3) The geographical spread of the action shall be relevant to the project objectives and activities.
- 4) The management structure and staff composition should be relevant to the size of partnership and the action itself. This topic shall also be closely monitored when the cross-border criteria joint staffing is applied in the Action.
- 5) Project budgets shall be checked carefully to eliminate the persistence of unrealistic figures or inappropriate distribution of funds across the project lifetime, unreasonable and action plan non-conform sharing of funds between partners, excessive staff costs and/or external expert costs, over-budgeting, costs presented not corresponding to the financial capacity of the Applicant, unrealistic or unneeded infrastructural and equipment purchase costs leading to the ineligible costs, travel costs too high or not in line with the proposed activities.

Assessors shall inform the Chairperson after all applications are evaluated.

Shall it become obvious already on this stage to the Assessor that the applicant is ineligible, she/he shall inform the Chairperson of the evaluation committee, however evaluation of such application shall not be interrupted and it must be fully evaluated.

Also if so deemed necessary by the EvC, for the efficient administration of the Evaluation Process, even though the verification of the eligibility is foreseen to be carried out only for the provisionally selected applicants at the end of the procedure, the EvC may still decide to verify this point at any previous step of the procedure.

Therefore the EvC can exclude an applicant at any stage of the Call for Proposals evaluation process whenever it is obvious that the latter does not meet the eligibility criteria.

If the Evaluation Committee is not satisfied with the quality of the assessment or the evaluation committee does not accept the scores awarded by the assessors to a proposal being the most justifiable case where there is a clear discrepancy of 10 points or more between the scores awarded by two assessors to one and the same concept note or full application, the committee then has to prepare a new, collective evaluation grid for the proposal concerned. A new list will be produced on the basis of the scores from the new evaluation, which replace those given by the assessors.

Eligibility Check

For the eligibility checks, the internal assessors should verify each proposal against the Checklist, the Declaration by the applicant (see section 8 of grant application form) and submitted supporting documents. The criteria published in the checklist with the call may under no circumstances be modified. Each proposal need only be checked by one assessor. Each evaluation grid must be initialled, signed and dated by the assessor having carried out the evaluation.

During the eligibility check, the MA can cooperate with national authorities and delegations of the European Union in Azerbaijan and Georgia to verify legal status of applicants as well as to clarify if there is no overlapping with other EU or public financing. These verifications and clarifications shall comply with

principles of impartiality and confidentiality. The national authorities involved should remain independent in the process.

Assessors must strictly follow the grid (Annex II) and shall use “yes” or “no” answer. For some cases option “not applicable” may be used instead of “yes”.

The grid below shows the cases when a “NO” answer leads to the rejection of the application or to the request for further clarifications with regards to the points listed under eligibility verification of the assessment grid.

Eligibility verification	If answer is “NO”
3. The checklist for the application form has been duly completed.	Request for clarification
4. The applicant satisfies the eligibility criteria in section 2.1.1	Rejection
5. The co-applicant(s), if any, satisfy the eligibility criteria in section 2.1.1.	Rejection
6. The affiliated entity(ies), if any, satisfy the eligibility criteria in section 2.1.2.	Rejection
7. The supporting documents listed below were submitted in accordance with the Guidelines (Section 2.4)	
a. The applicants statutes	Request for clarification
b. The statutes or articles of association of the co-applicants and the affiliated entity(ies)	Request for clarification
c. The applicant’s external audit report (if applicable)	Request for clarification
d. The Legal Entity File (see Annex D to the Guidelines for Applicants) has been duly completed and signed by the applicants and the supporting documents requested have been enclosed.	Request for clarification
e. Copy of the applicant’s latest accounts. (Can be substituted by external audit report for the last financial year)	Request for clarification
f. The recent copy of company registration certificate or any equivalent document	Request for clarification
g. Proof that land or premise is owned by applicant, co-applicant or affiliated entity or the official consent of the owner on use for 5 years (if applicable)	Request for clarification
h. Building permit or the proof that such permit is not necessary by law (if applicable)	Request for clarification
i. A document demonstrating the previous experience in the eligible regions (applicable in case of second and farther co-applicant(s) and/or affiliated entity(ies) established in geographical areas other than those considered eligible)	Request for clarification
Eligibility has been assessed by: Date:	
<p><u>decision:</u></p> <p>The Committee has checked the proposal’s eligibility under the criteria laid down in the Guidelines for Applicants and has selected the proposal for funding.</p>	

It is important that comments are filled in properly explaining the reasons for ineligibility.

The eligibility of the proposals from the reserve list will be verified if the proposals provisionally selected do not pass the eligibility check.

If the assessor has any doubts about the compliance of an applicant or affiliated entity, the issue should be raised to the chairperson of the evaluation committee for further advice and/or necessary clarification requests to the lead applicant.

The evaluation grids should be completed in English.

4 SCORING

The applications will be ranked in accordance with the final score they are attributed by the evaluation committee.

The concept note will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid. Only the concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

The list of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to those for which the total of requested contributions is twice more the available budget for this call for proposals, based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

The full application will receive an overall score out of 100. The score received for "relevance" in the concept note evaluation will be transferred to the full application evaluation grid as this aspect will not be assessed again.

4.1 General

Comments and scores must be coherent and consistent with the corresponding score. Therefore, a high score combined with critical or negative comments or a low score accompanied by positive comments would be incomprehensible and rather confusing for the evaluation committee to appreciate and the conclusion may be that it is not possible to rely on the assessment. Remember also that the comments provided may be communicated to the lead applicant upon request.

Scores between 1 and 5 (not 0) must be given. Half points are not accepted. The calculation of the sub- and total scores must be verified carefully.

The evaluation grid is divided into sections and subsections.

The first section contains the selection criteria which evaluate the financial, professional and technical capacity of the applicants to implement the action proposed. Applicants and their affiliated entity(ies) must have the necessary professional competencies and qualifications to complete the proposed action. The lead applicant must also have stable and sufficient sources of funding to keep operating throughout the action period and to participate, where appropriate, in its funding. The assessments are made considering the action proposed, the applicable payment schedule of the contract and on the basis of the relevant supporting documents defined in the guidelines for applicants. These may include an external audit report of the lead applicant, the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed.

The other subsections will be given a score between 1 and 5 (never 0) in accordance with the following guidelines: Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows:

1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

If the assessor has any doubts about the scoring of applicants, the issue should be raised to the chairperson of the evaluation committee for further advice and/or necessary clarification requests to the lead applicant.

4.2 Specific issues to be examined during the assessment

Additionally to the above mentioned scoring rules when assessing the concept notes, the External Assessors shall take into consideration the following

On question 1.4 in the relevance of the action by addressing 1 cross-border criteria the applicant will get 2 points, for 2 criteria 3 points, 3 criteria 4 points. A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal addresses all four cross border criteria. If none of the four criteria is addressed, the proposal will automatically be rejected.

Only the Concept Notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

In case discrepancy of 10 points or more points is revealed between the scores awarded to the concept note by two assessors, the evaluation committee will prepare the new collective evaluation grid for the proposal concerned.

If one Concept Note receives a score above 30 points from one assessor and a score less than 30 points from the other one, no matter the score difference, the EvC voting members themselves will assess the Concept Note and decide on the final scoring.

For full application evaluation if the total score for section 1 is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the total score is less than 50 points, the application will be rejected.

In case discrepancy of 10 points or more points is revealed between the scores awarded to the full application by two assessors, the evaluation committee will prepare the new collective evaluation grid for the proposal concerned.

If one full application receives a score above 50 points from one assessor and a score less than 50 points from the other one, no matter the score difference, the EvC voting members themselves will assess the full application and decide on the final scoring.

Contact Person: <Insert reference info of the chairperson of the evaluation committee of this call>.

DECLARATION OF IMPARTIALITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY³

PUBLICATION REF: _____

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I agree to participate in the evaluation of the above-mentioned call for proposals. By making this declaration, I declare that I am aware of the following:

1. Financial persons and other persons involved in budget implementation and management, including acts preparatory thereto, audit or control shall not take any action which may bring their own interests into conflict with those of the European Union.

If such a risk exists, the person in question shall refrain from such action. He or she shall refer the matter to the authorising officer by delegation and inform his or her hierarchical superior. The authorising officer shall confirm in writing whether a conflict of interests exists. Where a conflict of interests is found to exist, the person in question shall cease all activities in the matter. The authorising officer by delegation shall personally take any further appropriate action.

2. For the purposes of paragraph 1, a conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial person or other person, as referred to in paragraph 1, is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with a recipient.

I hereby declare that, to my knowledge, I have no conflict of interest with the operators who have applied to participate for this contract, including persons or members of a consortium, or the subcontractors proposed.

I confirm that if I discover during the evaluation that such a conflict exists or might exist, I shall declare it immediately to the chairperson of the evaluation committee. In the case that such conflict is confirmed by the chairperson, I agree to cease from participating in the evaluation committee.

I confirm that I have familiarised myself with the information available to date concerning this call for proposals, including the provisions of the Practical Guide relating to the evaluation process.

I shall execute my responsibilities impartially and objectively. I further declare that, to the best of my knowledge, I am not in a situation that could cast doubt on my ability to evaluate the application(s).

I shall maintain the strictest confidentiality in respect of all information acquired as a result of my involvement in the evaluation process of the above-mentioned call, as well as any information relating specifically to the object of this call.

I undertake neither to disclose such information to any person who is not already authorized to have access to such information, nor to discuss it with any person in any public place or where others could overhear it.

I furthermore undertake to use this information only in the context, and for the purposes of, the evaluation of this specific call.

After the conclusion of the evaluation I undertake not to retain copies of any written information, as well as any templates or models used in the course of my duties.

I understand that any unauthorized disclosure by me will result in the termination of my role as a member of this evaluation committee and may also render me liable to legal action.

³ To be completed by all persons involved in an evaluation process including members of the evaluation committee, whether voting (i.e. the evaluators) or non-voting and any observers.

I undertake to maintain this duty of confidentiality after the conclusion of my term as a member of this evaluation committee

Name	Function	Representing	Signature

Done at..... the

Annex II

ASSESSMENT GRID FOR THE FULL APPLICATION FORM

Grid completed by _____ Date: __/__/2016_

I. IDENTIFICATION DATA

Reference number:	
Applicant (country):	
Title of action:	

Instructions:

The internal assessor should put 'X' symbol to columns 'YES' and 'NO' and should provide detailed explanation.

In case the answer is 'NO', please indicate which requirements have not been fulfilled. The application will not be further evaluated in this case.

Text from column 'Explanation' will be used for requesting clarification / sending standard letter to the Applicant.

	YES	NO
OPENING & ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION		
1. The submission deadline has been met.		
2. The checklist for the application form has been duly completed.		
Administrative compliance has been checked by: Date:		
<u>DECISION:</u> A. The Committee has decided to evaluate the Concept Note, which passed the administrative checks.		

B. The Committee has decided to recommend evaluation of the full application form.		
The Concept Note has been evaluated by:		
Date:		
EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION FORM		
<u>DECISION:</u>		
A. The proposal has been provisionally selected as one of the top ranked proposals within the available financial envelope and the Committee has recommended eligibility checking.		
B. The proposal has been put on the reserve list as one of the top ranked proposals and the Committee has recommended eligibility checking		
The proposal has been evaluated by:		
Date:		
ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION		
3. The checklist for the application form has been duly completed.		
4. The applicant satisfies the eligibility criteria in section 2.1.1		
5. The co-applicant(s), if any, satisfy the eligibility criteria in section 2.1.1.		
6. The affiliated entity(ies), if any, satisfy the eligibility criteria in section 2.1.2.		
7. The supporting documents listed below were submitted in accordance with the Guidelines (Section 2.4)		
a. The applicants statutes		
b. The statutes or articles of association of the co-applicants and the affiliated entity(ies)		
c. The applicant's external audit report (if applicable)		
d. The Legal Entity File (see Annex D to the Guidelines for Applicants) has been duly completed and signed by the applicants and the supporting documents requested have been enclosed.		
e. Copy of the applicant's latest accounts. (Can be substituted by external audit report for the last financial year)		
f. The recent copy of company registration certificate or any equivalent document		
g. Proof that land or premise is owned by applicant, co-applicant or affiliated entity or the official consent of the owner on use for 5 years (if applicable)		

h. Building permit or the proof that such permit is not necessary by law (if applicable)		
i. A document demonstrating the previous experience in the eligible regions (applicable in case of second and farther co-applicant(s) and/or affiliated entity(ies) established in geographical areas other than those considered eligible)		
<p>Eligibility has been assessed by:</p> <p>Date:</p>		
<p><u>DECISION:</u></p> <p>The Committee has checked the proposal's eligibility and has recommended its evaluation according to the criteria laid down in the Guidelines for Applicants.</p>		

Annex III

CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION GRID

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: <TITLE>

Grid completed by	
Number of the proposal	
Name of the Applicant	
Title of the project	

Scoring guidelines

This evaluation grid is divided into **sections** and **subsections**. Each subsection must be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following guidelines:

Score	Meaning
1	very poor
2	poor
3	adequate
4	good
5	very good

These scores are added to give the total score for the section concerned. The totals for each section are then listed added together to give the total score for the concept note.

Insert the reference and/or passages of the relevant section in the concept note as well as any comment, remark and justification concerning the evaluation of the subsection. Note that upon request, any lead applicant may be given the comments and justifications provided.

	Section in the concept note	Comments & Justification	Scores	
1. Relevance of the action			Sub-score	30
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the Call for Proposals?*			5x2**	

1.2 How relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies) or region(s) is the proposal (including synergy with other EU initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?			5	
1.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?			5	
1.4 Does the proposal demonstrate a cross-border character? (i.e. fulfils at least one of the following criteria: (1) joint development, (2) joint implementation, (3) joint staffing, (4) joint financing) *			5 x2*	
Sub-score "1. Relevance of the action"				
2. Design of the action			Sub-score	20
2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the action? In particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved, take into account external factors and relevant stakeholders?			5x2**	
2.2 Is the action feasible and consistent in relation to the objectives and expected results?			5x2**	
Sub-score "2. Design of the action "				

TOTAL SCORE	50
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* A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal addresses all four criteria. If none of the four criteria is addressed, the proposal will automatically be rejected.

**these scores are multiplied by 2 because of their importance

Only the concept notes which have been given a score of a minimum of 30 points will be considered for pre-selection.

<u>General comments (major strong points and weaknesses).</u>
--

FULL APPLICATION EVALUATION GRID

Grid completed by _____ Date: __/__/2016

I. IDENTIFICATION DATA

Reference number:	
Budget line/EDF:	
Applicant (country):	
Title of action:	
Region(s) or country/ies targeted:	
Amount requested (and % of total eligible costs):	EUR _____ (___%) [_____%]
Duration:	___ months

Scoring guidelines

This evaluation grid is divided into **sections** and **subsections**. Each subsection must be given a score between 1 and 5 in accordance with the following guidelines:

Score	Meaning
1	very poor
2	poor
3	adequate
4	good
5	very good

These scores are added to give the total score for the section concerned. The totals for each section are then listed in section 6 and added together to give the total score for the full application.

Each section contains a box for comments. These comments should address the issues covered by that section. Comments must be made on each **section**. Extra space may be used for comments if required.

Insert the reference and/or passages of the relevant section in the full proposal as well as any comment, remark and justification concerning the evaluation of the subsection. Note that upon request, applicants may be given the comments and justifications provided.

II. EVALUATION GRID

1. Financial and operational capacity	Score
1.1 Do the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), if applicable, have sufficient experience of project management ?	/ 5
1.2 Do the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), if applicable, have sufficient technical expertise ? (specially knowledge of the issues to be addressed.)	/ 5
1.3 Do the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), if applicable, have sufficient management capacity ? (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	/ 5
1.4 Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance ?	/ 5
Comments & Justification:	

2. Relevance of the action		Score	
<i>Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation</i>		/30	
Total score:		/30	
Comments:			
3. Effectiveness and feasibility of the action	Section in the full application	Comments	Score
3.1 Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?			/ 5
3.2 Is the action plan clear and feasible?			/ 5
3.3 Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the action? Is any evaluation planned?			/ 5
3.4 Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?			/ 5
Total score:			/ 20
Comments & Justification:			

If the total score for this section is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections is 1, the application will also be rejected. In case of doubts on compliance, the Evaluation Committee may decide to issue a request for further proofs to the lead applicant. Where the Guidelines for applicants provide for a redistribution of the grant and where the applicant proposes such financial contribution to third parties, it has to be verified that the grant beneficiary offers adequate guarantees as regards the recovery of amounts due.

If the total score is less than 50 points, the application will be rejected.

4. Sustainability of the action	Section in the full application	Comments	Score
4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?			/ 5
4.2 Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects? (Including scope for replication, extension and information sharing.)			/ 5
<p>4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financially (how will the activities be financed after the funding ends?) - institutionally (will structures allowing the activities to continue be in place at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?) - at policy level (where applicable) (what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. will it lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc?) - environmentally (if applicable) (will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?) 			/ 5
Total score:			/ 15
Comments & Justification:			
5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	Section in the full application	Comments	Score
5.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?			/ 5
5.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory?			/ 5x2
Total score:			/ 15
Comments & Justification:			

General comments (major strong points and weaknesses).

6. Total score and recommendations		Score
6.1	Financial and operational capacity	/ 20
6.2	Relevance of the action	/ 30
6.3	Effectiveness and feasibility of the action	/ 20
6.4	Sustainability of the action	/ 15
6.5	Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	/ 15
TOTAL :		/ 100
Recommendation:		Not provisionally selected :