



## ***The evaluation process of applications submitted under the 1st Call for Proposals.***

Evaluation process is a complicated and time-consuming process due to many involved actors and numerous evaluation stages, described in the Programme document, Practical Guide to Contract procedures for EU external actions and other related documents.

### ***1. Main actors involved, their roles and responsibilities***

**Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC)** – in the context of the evaluation process the main task of the JMC is to decide on the evaluation criteria for project proposals and to take the final decision on the projects to be approved and the amounts to be granted to them. The JMC includes representatives of national authorities responsible for the implementation of the Programme, regional authorities from the Programme eligible area and representatives of the civil society.

**Evaluation Committee (EVC)** is responsible for the whole evaluation process. The work of the EVC is regulated by the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the EVC, which were approved by the JMC. EVC consists of: 3 **Voting members**, representing each Programme country, **Chairperson** (a non-voting member), who is responsible for coordinating the evaluation process; **Secretary** (a non-voting member) and non-voting **Observers**. Each person participating in the EVC work is appointed by the JMC.

**Assessors** assist to the Evaluation Committee. The pool of assessors is composed of: i) the JTS employees and ii) external assessors selected via an open call for external assessors, which has been announced on the Programme website and communicated to national authorities in Lithuania, Poland and Russia involved in the Programme implementation. The final pool of assessors has been approved by the JMC.

### ***2. Stages of the evaluation process***

In accordance with the provisions of the Programme document the first step of the evaluation, which is the opening session and the administrative and eligibility check, has been carried out by the JTS under the supervision of the EVC Chairperson. The **opening session** took place on 25-27 October 2010 when all proposals delivered to the JTS have been opened and numbered. During the opening session it has been checked whether the submission deadline has been respected. If the deadline has not respected, the application was automatically rejected and withdrawn from further evaluation.

**The administrative and eligibility check** has been performed only by the JTS employees (acting as assessors) and approved by the EVC. Only those proposals that met the deadline have been subject to the administrative and eligibility check. The administrative and eligibility check has been made in compliance with the criteria mentioned in the administrative compliance and the eligibility verification grids that are part of the Guidelines for Grant Applicants. Each project proposal has been examined independently by two JTS employees.

If criteria indicated in the Guidelines for Grant Applicants have not been satisfied, the applicant has been invited to submit clarifications. It should be noticed that the majority of applications required clarifications from the Applicants, which is one of the reasons that the process took 4 months. When the project did not meet the administrative and eligibility criteria, it was rejected. Proposals that have satisfied the criteria have been subject to evaluation at further steps described below.

After the opening session, and the administrative and eligibility check **the meeting of the Evaluation Committee** is organized in order to approve report from opening session and administrative and eligibility check. The report includes a list of projects which are recommended for further evaluation and a list of projects which are to be rejected with the reasons for rejection. The decision is taken by all the EVC members unanimously. In case of the Lithuania-Poland-Russia Programme this meeting was held on 2-3 March 2011.



Following the report the JTS (on behalf of the JMA) has informed all applicants participating in the call for proposals in writing whether their applications have been submitted within the deadline and fulfilled the administrative and eligibility criteria.

Only the proposals that fulfilled the administrative and eligibility criteria are subject to the quality assessment. The objective of **the quality evaluation** is to obtain a list of proposals recommended for funding within each of Programme priority ranked according to the score attributed to them. In this step the quality of each application form is assessed against the criteria defined in the Guidelines for Grant Applicants. Each application is evaluated by two assessors. The total score is the arithmetical average of scores given by the two assessors. When there is a **significant difference** (i.e. it means a difference of more than 20 points in the total score or when one of the thresholds is reached in only one assessment or when one assessor recommended the project while the second rejected it) between the scores awarded, the third assessment is conducted, which is presented to the EVC members only for the information purpose in order to facilitate the decision of the EVC.

**Then the next meeting of the Evaluation Committee** is organized in order to approve report from quality assessment. The EVC may decide to approve the ranking drawn up by the secretary on the basis of the assessors' grids and comments. If the EVC does not accept the scores awarded by the assessors to a proposal, for example where there is a significant difference between the scores awarded by the assessors, the justification of the decision must be given in the evaluation report. In this situation the EVC is obliged to carry out a new evaluation of the proposal(s) concerned (it must complete one collective evaluation grid). The ranking list will be amended on the basis of the scores from the new evaluation, which replace those completed by the assessors. All such decisions must be recorded and fully explained in the evaluation report. The final evaluation report is signed by all EVC members and submitted to the JMC for approval.

The quality evaluation of the applications performed by the assessors was planned to be concluded by the end of May 2011. However, the Lithuanian and Russian partners (the National Authorities) requested on 12 April 2011 that each infrastructural project would be assessed by the third assessor from the JTS, even if there was no significant difference in scores awarded by two assessors. The JMA was initially against such a proposal, because it was not required by the Rules of Procedures of the EVC and would prolong the process. Finally the participating countries reached a consensus during a meeting on 20 July 2011, which resulted in performing additional assessment. The additional assessment was conducted on 21 July – 26 August 2011. It was followed by a meeting of the Evaluation Committee, which was organized in Warsaw on the 13-14 September 2011, on 4-5 October 2011 and was continued on the 8-9 November 2011.

During the meetings the EVC members and observers elaborated upon the project proposals submitted by the Applicants. It should be noted that due to the decision of the JMC no electronic version of the applications could be provided therefore each member and observer of the EVC was invited to get acquainted with the applications in the JTS' premises at any time. The members and observers were presented with every evaluation grid developed by the assessors during the process. During the EVC meeting on 4-5 October the Chairman of the EVC suggested that only projects where two assessments had a significant difference would be discussed in details and the application with consistent recommendations by both assessors would not be further analyzed. The proposal did not meet with acceptance of the Voting Members. Two meetings of the Evaluation Committee were not enough to conclude the work and prepare the ranking list of recommended projects. As a result another meeting of the Committee was held on 8-9 November 2011 in Warsaw. During this meeting the ranking list of recommended projects was finally prepared. Also the decision regarding the date of the 5th Joint Monitoring Committee meeting where the proposed ranking list of the projects submitted during the 1st Call for Proposal should be approved was taken.

The final decision is made by the JMC. Projects recommended for support are those that following the quality evaluation received the minimum score envisaged for the whole project as well as for the required sections. No project proposal failing to pass the quality evaluation thresholds may be approved for financing. If the JMC decides not to follow all or part of the recommendations of the EVC (a ranking list), it



shall explain its decision in writing. The decision shall then be sent via the JMA to the European Commission (EC) for prior approval. The EC communicates its opinion to the JMA within 15 working days. The JMC may approve the projects with recommendations giving a clear deadline for their fulfilment. The JMC may also establish a reserve list of projects, ranked by the score. If the applicant awarded a grant does not decide to follow the recommendations of the JMC or decides not to implement the project, the support may be given to a reserve project in accordance with the ranking list approved by the JMC (or otherwise if the JMC shall make a relevant decision during approval of the reserve list). Following the JMC decision on the grant award, the JTS (on behalf of the JMA) shall inform all applicants participating in the respective call for proposals in writing whether their applications have been approved for support or not.

### ***3. Timetable for the first call***

Announcement of the Call 15 June 2010

Deadline for submission of Applications 15 September 2010

Opening session 25 - 27 October 2010

Administrative and eligibility check 28 October 2010 - 1 March 2011

First Evaluation Committee meeting 2-3 March 2011

Quality evaluation 9 March - 29 April 2011

Request for additional reassessment – 12 April 2011

Quality evaluation (internal and external reassessment) 22 April - 30 May 2011

Additional quality evaluation 21 July - 26 August 2011

Second Evaluation Committee meeting 13 - 14 September 2011

Third Evaluation Committee meeting 4 - 5 October 2011

Fourth Evaluation Committee meeting 8 - 9 November 2011