

Guidelines for assessment of applications for Erasmus Youth accreditations

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the process for assessment of applications under the 2020 Call for Erasmus accreditation in the field of Youth.

These guidelines complement the general requirements set out in the 2020 Guide for National Agencies and its annexes (in particular annexes III.01a Erasmus+ Guide for experts on Quality assessment and III.2 - Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Guidelines for NAs on quality assessment). Consequently, standard rules, requirement, procedures and practices that are defined in the Guide for National Agencies apply also to the assessment of applications for Erasmus accreditations. Standard procedures will not apply if a different procedure is defined below, or if the standard procedure is not relevant due to the provisions of the Call for accreditations and its Rules of application.

2. Assessment steps

2.1. Eligibility and exclusion criteria

The National Agency will organise the check of eligibility and exclusion criteria as described in Article 3.7.3 of the Guide for National Agencies.

2.2. Selection and award criteria

The selection and award criteria will be assessed as part of quality assessment in accordance with Article 3.7.4 of the Guide for National Agencies.

The following minima apply with regard to the type and number of experts: Each application must be assessed by at least two experts, no external expert is required.

The selection and award criteria may be assessed by the same or by different experts, depending on the choice of the National Agency. The decision on the selection criteria assessment can be either positive (compliant) or negative (non-compliant), while the result of the assessment of award criteria is a numerical score as described in the Call.

The verification of double funding procedure does not apply in the case of applications for accreditation in the field of youth.

3. Guidelines for experts for the quality assessment of accreditation applications

This section presents the main principles to be followed by the experts conducting quality assessment of applications.

The information in section 3, as well as any complementary information issued by the NA, must be made available to applicants on the National Agency's website.

3.1. General principles

The following guidance is additional to the overall assessment framework presented in the 2020 Erasmus+ Guide for Expert assessors. The main principles of that Guide remain applicable unless a different instruction is provided in these guidelines or in the Rules of application.

The assessment scores will follow the standard pattern to indicate the level of quality:

Maximum score for a criterion	Range of scores			
	Very good	Good	Fair	Weak
40	34 - 40	28 - 33	20 - 27	0 - 19
30	26 - 30	21 - 25	15 - 20	0 - 14
20	17 - 20	14 - 16	10 - 13	0 - 9
10	9 - 10	7 - 8	5 - 6	0 - 4

At the level of overall assessment, the experts must pay particular attention to the following aspects specific to applications for Erasmus accreditation:

- **Long-term importance of the accreditation:** while the call for Erasmus Youth accreditations does not allocate any funding, the approval of the accreditation allows successful applicants to access funding over a long period of time, and in some cases for significant grant levels. The quality of applications should be assessed accordingly.
- **Careful consideration of the overall quality threshold:** the minimum requirement for each award criterion is set at 50% of the points allocated to that criterion. However, to be considered for approval, an application must score at least 70/100 points in total.

This higher threshold implies that for an application to be successful, the overall quality of the application must be higher than a simple sum of its parts. In particular, the different sections and elements of the application must show coherence and synergy. Before concluding their assessment with a pass mark, experts must determine if applicants have managed to demonstrate a vision for their organisation, as opposed to only addressing the questions one by one.

- **Proportionality, contextualisation and non-discrimination:** In line with the award criteria, it is important to consider each proposal on its own merits, internal consistency and appropriateness for the applicant organisation.

As a matter of proportionality, experts should avoid direct comparison of applications by organisations with a different profile. A similar activity plan presented by two very different organisations should not necessarily yield the same score.

Previous experience in the programme, the organisation's size, length of the activity plan and the number of objectives proposed should be considered very carefully. Experts must pay attention not to apply an over-simplified 'more is better' approach (e.g. longer activity plan or more numerous objectives cannot automatically translate into a higher score).

Rather, experts must take into account the organisation's context and the entire content of the application when considering any of the above-mentioned aspects. A good application will demonstrate self-awareness on part of the applicant, with a realistic outlook about their own capacity, resources and experience.

It is particularly important to prevent any discrimination against smaller organisations or those with less existing capacity. By defining a few well-targeted objectives over the first two to three years of implementation, such organisations may propose plans with very high added value for their own development and the field and gradual build-up of capacity and competences.

- **Recognising original, convincing and genuine proposals:** experts should critically evaluate if the information in the application form derives from a genuine process of self-reflection and self-assessment on the part of the applicant, if it is rooted in the reality of its everyday youth work and if the links with the objectives of the call are concrete and tangible.
- **Consequences of the evaluation score:** the resulting score may be used as part of budget allocation formulas when the approved applicants apply for funding. It is therefore necessary to fine-tune the scores to reflect the quality of the application as precisely as possible.
- **Dealing with insufficient, irrelevant or poorly structured information:** to assess the application correctly, experts will require contextual information that they must find in the application form. Applications may be scored lower if the provided answers contain insufficient information, if the included information is vague, poorly explained or not relevant thus preventing a thorough assessment. The space provided in the application form is limited so applicants must demonstrate their ability to select the most pertinent information and present it effectively.

3.2. Relevance of the organisation's profile and experience (20 points)

The purpose of the relevance criterion is to make sure that the award of the accreditation to the applicant organisation actually contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the call. For this purpose, the experts shall consider primarily the information in the section 'Background' and analyse to what extent the organisation is rooted in the youth field.

The 20-point maximum score for the relevance criterion means that experts must assess the relevance strictly. Even if the other parts of the assessment show that the proposed Activity Plan is technically well-written and logically sound, experts must consider the long-term importance of the accreditation. Consequently, applications from organisations whose relevance for the field and the call is questionable must not reach the quality threshold (50% of the points) for the relevance criterion.

3.3. Strategic development (40 points)

The needs and issues addressed should be clearly described and the objectives and activities planned should have a substantial positive impact on the applicant organisation, the partner organisations, the participants and the youth field in general. The activities represent the means to address the needs and achieve the set objectives. Experts should thus assess the

activity plan in relation to the set objectives but also the size and profile of the organisation and with the management arrangements.

For both the objectives and the activity plan, a balance should be achieved between being realistic and ambitious enough to achieve impact.

This element is strongly linked with the concept of proportionality, as explained under 'General principles'. Therefore, while the award criterion clearly focuses in the application form section ' ', the experts must take into account the context presented in other parts of the application form. The assessment must be well-contextualised and there is therefore no automatic advantage in proposing lower or higher estimated number of objectives/activities/participants. The most appropriate proposal will depend on the content of the application itself.

In addition to the overall assessment of the criterion, experts should carefully examine each proposed objective. If the application is approved, the organisation's overall progress will be measured against these objectives and implemented activities. Therefore, each approved objective must be clear and concrete enough to serve that purpose.

The experts may recommend a reduction of the number of activities and/or participants (in all or some categories and years) if they estimate that the proposed number is disproportionately high in relation to the set objectives, or the organisation's capacity and available resources. In case of significantly exaggerated requests, this disproportionality should also be reflected in the evaluation score of this award criterion. Experts may also recommend postponing a part of the planned activities. Similarly, experts could recommend to remove an activity type from the activity plan if the organisation doesn't demonstrate appropriate understanding of its specificities and measures to implement such activities to high standards.

The experts should also consider trends in the estimated number of yearly activities over time. The time dimension is especially important for organisations with less experience in the Programme that may require a learning period at the start of implementation.

The organisation should be able to demonstrate, and experts assess, that the accreditation is not only be seen as a pre-requirement for applying for funds in a simplified way, but that it fits within the organisation' work and is part of an internal process of continuous development and improvement.

The experts should assess the approach of the organisation to inclusion and diversity, including where relevant proactive, qualitative and efficient measures that will be taken to reach out to young people with fewer opportunities and/or ensure diversity, as well as its planned involvement and role to support and promote the Erasmus programme.

Within this criterion, the experts should also take into consideration the extent to which the organisation plans to integrate elements of environmental sustainability and virtual components, key features of the new Programme.

3.4. Quality of management and coordination (40 points)

The main purpose of this criterion is to determine whether applicants can deliver high quality learning activities, in line with the Erasmus Youth Quality Standards.

The application should demonstrate that efficient measures are put in place and appropriate resources allocated to implement the activity plan in a qualitative way and reach the set objectives. As for the previous criterion, experts should pay particular attention to proportional assessment, as resources to commit would vary depending on the applicant's objectives and the estimated number of activities and participants. Experts should also evaluate the reliability of the commitments made by the applicant, based on the measures described to ensure continuity and the level of involvement of the organisation's management.

The approach to identify and involve partners should be suitable to establish quality partnerships and an appropriate level of cooperation and commitment between organisations. Experts should also assess whether the profile and experience of the partners are consistent with the set objectives and whether the organisation will reach out to new or less experienced organisation with Erasmus.

The organisation should foresee effective procedures to guarantee protection and safety of the participants and an appropriate level of support before, during and after the activities. Experts should assess the appropriateness of such measures in relation also to the activity plan and type of participants to be involved.

The organisation should have a clear method and concrete activities to identify risks and manage conflicts and problems as well as to monitor and measure the quality of the activities and the progress towards reaching its objectives.

The organisation should demonstrate a clear understanding of the participatory approach and methods, the capacity to embed them in all activities and to ensure a strong learning dimension. Experts should also assess the measures foreseen to support participants' reflection on their learning outcomes, their identification and validation.

A quality plan for disseminating the outcomes of the activities should be concretely described.

4. Award of the Erasmus Youth accreditation

Following the quality assessment, the National Agency will award Erasmus accreditation to applicants according to the procedure described in the Rules of application. The award decision shall be taken by an Evaluation committee composed and operating in accordance with the principles defined in the 2020 Guide for National Agencies.

The National Agency shall finalise the award of the accreditation within 8 weeks following receipt of the application.

The Organisation ID (OID) of the applicant organisation must be validated (certified) before the award of the accreditation.

4.1. Communicating the award of the Erasmus accreditation

The information on the decision to award the Erasmus Youth accreditation communicated to the applicant must include:

- The accreditation code as generated by EplusLink;
- The start date and end date of the accreditation's validity;
- The evaluation score;
- Any changes to the activity plan requested by the experts;
- Comments and any recommendations for improvement addressed to the applicant by the experts;
- A reference to the Call, the rules of application and the Erasmus Youth quality standards;
- An indicative schedule of planned accreditation progress reports.

For the accreditation to become valid, applicants must provide their agreement to the conditions of the award. The agreement shall be confirmed with a signature by the applicant organisation's legal representative.

Following the completion of these procedures, the National Agency shall publish on its website the list of the accredited organisations.