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Call for assessors

for the Interreg VI-A Hungary–Slovakia Programme

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Introduction

The Joint Secretariat of the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary and Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic is launching Call for assessors to select qualified and experienced professionals to join the Programme's Pool of Assessors.

The Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme operates within the 2021-2027 financial framework of the European Union as a part of the Cohesion Policy. The overall aim of the Programme is to eliminate administrative and legal obstacles on the Hungarian-Slovak border, build up mutual trust between the citizens of Hungary and Slovakia and to make the border region more competitive, inclusive and environmentally friendly. These aims are transformed into different specific objectives described in the Interreg Programme document. External assessors are expected to have high-level, professional experience respective to these objectives. The present Call is addressed to individuals for the establishment of a pool of independent, qualified and experienced experts to support the Managing Authority, National Authority and the Joint Secretariat in the selection process of operations. The present Call can be extended or can be reopened with prior agreement of Managing Authority and National Authority.

The Pool of Assessors created based on this Call will only include the candidates fulfilling the requested minimum requirements and meeting the selection criteria. Only the assessors registered in the Pool of Assessors can take part in the assessment process as external experts. Please note that being registered in the Pool of Assessors does not imply any obligations to award a contract to the successful candidates.

Tasks to be accomplished

Task of the external assessor is to support the Managing Authority, National Authority and the Joint Secretariat in the selection of operations via ensuring the necessary thematic expertise relevant for the specific objective. This task includes the followings activities:

- participation on briefings and trainings organized by the Joint Secretariat;
- acquaintance of relevant programme documents (e.g. Interreg Programme, Application package, Methodology and criteria for selection of projects etc.);
- participate in setting up of the terms and conditions of the Call for proposals with professional contributions;
- content-wise and financial assessment of project proposals as follows:
 - appraise each criterion of the assessment grid with a score accompanied by a clear qualitative statement in English language justifying the given score;
 - appraise the financial request of the Applicants according to the principles of the sound financial management;
 - discuss the assessment with other assessors in the frame of consensus meeting;
 - provide further additional comments at the request of the JS;
 - provide assistance to the Monitoring Committee;
 - assist the complaint handling procedure if necessary.

Thematic fields of evaluation

Action 1.2.1 – Protection and preservation of the natural capital

The selected actions contribute to the protection and preservation of the natural capital that creates the basic conditions for human existence. These conditions include fertile soil, multifunctional forests and productive land. One of the main cohesion elements of the border region is its landscape structure which creates solid ground for joint actions. The selected actions contribute to nature conservation and preservation, improvement of the quality of forests and soil, increasing of the biodiversity on the programme area and the development of green infrastructure.

Nature conservation and preservation

Wetlands, natural and near-natural forests are vital for biodiversity, society and in combat against the climate change. By conservation of forests and restoration of wetlands the action contributes to reducing the CO² emissions and to the protection of ecosystems critical for safeguarding biodiversity.

Soils are a vital resource, delivering soil functions and many essential ecosystem services such as water and nutrient cycle regulation, food production, providing a physical basis for construction, and providing habitat for various species. The key soil threats are erosion, floods and landslides, loss of soil organic matter, salinization, contamination, compaction, sealing, and loss of soil biodiversity. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- protect and restore natural wetlands, grasslands and shrubs;
- provide biodiversity-friendly afforestation, reforestation, tree-planting and re-grassing;
- promote agroforestry and activities significantly contributing to prevention of soil degradation and preservation of soil functions;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising educational campaigns;
- support nature-friendly forest management.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is made up of the diversity of genes, the diversity of species and the diversity of entire ecosystems. The loss of biodiversity is the loss of species and reduction in the productivity and resilience of entire ecosystems. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- encourage the conservation and restocking of native (landscape) climate-resilient species, and habitats;
- support the conservation and protection of the genetic resources of forest tree species;
- enhance cultivation and breeding of native plant and animal species as well as new and innovative forms - e.g. agroforestry;
- ensure the protection of the habitats and breeding grounds of endangered species;
- track, control, and eliminate invasive species;
- supports the increase of biodiversity in agricultural areas (afforestation, shrubbery, deep-sea);
- monitor wildlife migration corridors;
- revitalize habitats and prevent habitat fragmentation;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising educational campaigns;
- increase environmental awareness of habitats and biodiversity and expand the network of institutions with such educational activities in the natural environment.

Green infrastructure

Green infrastructure is network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services such as water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation. Proposed actions improve environmental conditions via the development of the network of green (land) and blue (water) spaces therefore improve the citizens' health and quality of life. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that maintain, reconnect and enhance green infrastructure such as

- parks, greenways, river corridors;
- multifunctional farms;
- fish ladders, fish passage, fish sluice on border rivers;
- green walls and roofs;
- reed bed;
- wildlife overpass;
- wildflower verge, sandy grassland;
- beehives;
- hedgerows;
- nest boxes, trays, burrows, bat protection devices.

Action 1.2.2 – Joint risk management

The action contributes to increase the cross-border risk-management capacity in the border region and to improve the coordination and reaction capabilities of organisations involved into risk management.

Flood risk and water management

However, flood events are a part of nature, society has become more vulnerable to natural hazards. The proposed actions contribute to the shift from defensive action against hazards to management of the risk and living with floods, bearing in mind that flood prevention should not be limited to flood events. The quality of surface waters has improved over recent decades but still pollution from agriculture, urban and industrial wastewater nevertheless remain significant. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional co-operation of competent authorities;
- restore rivers' natural flood zones in order to reactivate the ability of natural wetlands and floodplains to retain water and alleviate flood impacts;
- build up early warning and forecast systems;
- improve flood protection infrastructure;
- supporting the replacement of small watercourses;
- remove harmful and persistent substances from surface water bodies;
- improve water management and water resource conservation related to flood protection;
- assess tourism potential of water bodies;
- involve local communities through awareness-raising educational campaigns.

Disaster risk management

In recent years, the EU has seen a wide range of adverse events that caused the devastation of human life, property, the environment and cultural heritage. The action contributes to increase the cross-border disaster risk-management capacity in the border region and to improve the coordination and reaction capabilities of organisations involved in disaster risk management. Measure supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- strengthen cross-border institutional cooperation of competent authorities;
- address extreme weather conditions that pose a serious hydrological threat, extremely destructive storms, hail, drought with a lack of drinking water;
- monitor and analyse relevant micro pollutants and pollutant (pesticides, pharmaceuticals and their metabolites, industrial pollution) in drinking water;
- improve infrastructural background for provision of water for human consumption (extraction, treatment, storage and distribution infrastructure, efficiency measures, drinking water supply);
- monitor and analyse water quality and quantify significant pressures on surface waters;
- remove harmful and persistent substances from surface water bodies;
- improve infrastructure preventing or eliminating risks posed by natural and man-made hazards;
- enhance the public awareness, preparedness and participation of citizens.

Action 2.4.1 – Preservation of local heritage

Under the influence of processes such as globalization, modernization and urbanisation rural municipalities see their authenticity, the identity, the traditions of places becoming undermined making them less capable to work on the preservation of their local identity. This action enables to rural and small urban areas to sustain and strengthen their local identities. This is mainly carried out in the form of activities concerning place making activities; thereby strongly linking local identity to place identity. The action contributes to the improvement of the life-quality and preservation of local values and traditions. The action supports among others cross-border initiatives that

- valorise cultural, historical and religious heritage sites ensuring its sustainable utilization for community-building and cultural purposes increasing the life-quality of the local community;
- promote “smart and competitive villages” in rural areas that use innovative solutions to improve their resilience, building on local strengths and opportunities.

Professional requirements

External assessors are expected to have professional experience in the above described thematic fields.

External assessors must have

- master’s degree relevant to the action of the Programme,
- at least 5 years’ professional experience acquired in positions related to the selected thematic field and
- excellent analytical and evaluation skills.

Assets

- possess sound knowledge of the national legislation of the field professional expertise;
- have a sound knowledge of cross-border cooperation and/or EU Funds and/or project implementation;
- be fluent in speaking, reading and writing in English;
- be proficient in either Hungarian or Slovak;
- have proper IT literacy necessary to complete the assignment;

- be independent from any Programme bodies and Programme project applicants or beneficiaries involved in the call for proposals;

Prior experience in assessment of project proposals under national, European or international funding programmes as well as under programmes directly managed by the European Commission is considered as an advantage.

Other terms of the assignment

Briefing meetings and trainings with the Joint Secretariat takes place in Budapest at the premises of the Joint Secretariat or may be done on-line. Experts will be required to carry out their tasks remotely using their own tools at their habitual working place. The assessment of the assigned applications shall be performed and finalised online via Interreg+ monitoring system according to a time schedule as agreed with the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat. The project proposals subject to the assessment will be available online in the INTERREG+ monitoring system of the Programme.

The number of project proposals which will be assigned to an expert may vary depending on the thematic scope and number of proposals received and will be agreed between the expert and the MA/JS. The assessor is entitled to a fee of 150€ (VAT excluded) per each project.

To ensure the independence of the quality assessment, prior to the signature of the contract the selected expert has to sign a declaration of impartiality certifying that there is no conflict of interest exists and that they undertake to inform the MA/JS if any situation of conflict, even potential, or external attempt to interfere occurs while carrying out their duties. Personal data submitted by the experts will be only used for the participation to the selection procedure and for the possible signature of a contract with the MA/JS.

Applying

Applications have to include the following documents:

- professional CV;
- cover letter, describing the experience, qualifications, skills and motivation to perform the tasks with the reference to the relevant action;
- scanned copies of diplomas and certificates in national languages;
- further documents proving their skills;

In the documents, candidates must provide evidence that they possess the required skills, sufficient professional experience and expertise in specific areas. The Managing Authority reserves the right to ask the candidates fulfilling requirements for participating in personal interviews as well. Applications not including all the above mentioned documents or submitted above the deadline will be rejected.

Deadline for sending the applications is **26/02/2023 | 23:59 CET**. The documents shall be sent electronically to the e-mail address: application@skhu.eu. Please indicate in the subject the following text: **“HUSK-2301-CFA”**

When submitting an application within the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme as a natural person (referred to: the Person) the Person gives consent that within the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia

Programme for its implementation the personal data provided by the Person shall be handled in line with the relevant national and EU regulations. The condition for submitting an application within the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme is to understand and accept the present privacy policy.

Applicants fulfilling requirements and selection criteria will be assessed by the Selection Committee composed by the Managing Authority, National Authority and Joint Secretariat. Selection process will be conducted based on the criteria set by the current Call for Assessors. Applicants will be informed about the result of the selection process via e-mail in due time.

Selected applicants will be included into the Pool of experts. Please note that being registered in the Pool of Assessors does not imply any obligations on JS and Széchenyi Programme Office Nonprofit LLC. regarding the assignment of project proposals to the selected assessors.