



# **Call for Applications No. 1 for Support from the "Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity" Programme, funded under the Second Swiss Contribution**

**The Ministry of the Environment**

is launching a **call for applications** on **21<sup>st</sup> November 2024**

for the **implementation of projects** under the **Enhancing Biodiversity** or **Sustainable Tourism** pillar.

## **Preamble**

This call is addressed to applicants seeking support from the "Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity" Support Measure funded by the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme under the Second Swiss Contribution, for the Implementation of projects in the field of environmental and climate protection. The call is published on the website of the Ministry of the Environment, at [www.mzp.cz](http://www.mzp.cz).

Applicants acting as lead applicants may apply for support for the **implementation of** their projects. Support can be applied for projects to be implemented within the territory of the Czech Republic, except for the territory of the Capital City of Prague<sup>1</sup>.

This call sets forth the conditions for granting aid and the process for submitting and assessing grant applications.

## **The second Swiss Contribution**

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The Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme is implemented based on the ***Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Czech Republic on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to selected EU***

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<sup>1</sup> The applicant's registered office may be located in the territory of the capital city of Prague. The project activities cannot be carried out in the City of Prague.



**Member States to reduce economic and social disparities within the EU**, signed on 29 June 2023. The conclusion of the Framework Agreement allows the Czech Republic to receive funds from the second Swiss Contribution under the so-called cohesion allocation of CHF 76.9 million. (approx. CZK 1.845 billion), of which CHF 38.4 million has been allocated for the Environment and Climate Protection area (approx. CZK 921.6 million).

The basic framework of the "Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity" Support Measure (hereinafter also referred to as "the Programme"), including its thematic areas of support, financial allocation, duration, objectives and specific conditions of implementation are defined in the ***Specific Framework for the implementation of the Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Czech Republic on the implementation of the Second Swiss contribution to selected EU Member States to reduce economic and social disparities within the EU*** issued by Switzerland on 1 June 2023.

The implementation of the Programme is carried out in accordance with the Regulations on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to selected EU Member States to reduce economic and social disparities within the EU, the Support Measure Set-Up and other implementing programme documents.

## **I. Introductory Provisions and Terms of the Call**

### **1. Foundations**

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The overall objective of the Programme is to address the two main causes of biodiversity loss, which are largely due to human intervention in ecosystems (e.g. landscape fragmentation) and overexploitation of ecosystems (e.g. overtourism). This open call aims to contribute to enhancing biodiversity by reducing pressure on ecosystem functions and services in the landscape, especially in valuable natural sites.

The basic structure of the Programme is divided into two main pillars:

- a) Enhancing Biodiversity
- b) Sustainable Tourism



## 2. Total Allocation

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Under this call for proposals, applicants can request support for **co-financing eligible expenditures** of projects approved under one of the Programme's pillars.

The allocation for this call is as follows:

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|----|--|------------------|
| a) | for the Enhancing Biodiversity pillar: | CZK 300 million, |
| b) | for the Sustainable Tourism pillar:    | CZK 660 million. |

Each project can only be submitted under one of the two pillars. There is no limit to the number of projects an applicant may submit.

## 3. Amount of Support

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- Support will be allocated on the basis of the outcome of the assessment of the project application concept and subsequently the full project application under this call.
- The minimum total eligible budget per project is CZK 70 million.
- The maximum amount of support per project is equal to the total allocation of the relevant pillar under this call.
- The support provided under this call may cover up to **90% of the final eligible project expenditure**. For projects involving State Aid, the maximum aid rate and amount will be set in accordance with the State Aid rules.
- The final amount of the support will be determined by the Grant Award Decision or similar legal act (*hereinafter referred to as the "GAD"*). If the beneficiary undertakes activities exceeding this amount, it is obliged to cover these additional expenses from its own resources.
- The amount paid will be based on the actual implementation of the budget approved by the grantor and the final amount of support provided to the beneficiary.
- Support will generally be provided through a combination of ex-ante and ex-post payments. The applicant can request an ex-ante payment of up to 50% of the grant amount. 10% of the grant amount will be paid to the applicant upon the project closure based on the approved final project report.



## 4. Eligible Applicants and Partnerships

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An eligible applicant is any **legal entity** with a registered office in the EU with a legal personality. An eligible legal entity that can apply for support is considered to be the applicant proposing a project for the implementation of eligible activities.

If the beneficiary of the project is a contributory organisation or an educational legal entity established by a region or a municipality, the beneficiary of the project shall provide the founder's approval along with the grant application.

Projects can be implemented alone or in partnership. A project partner may be a legal entity established in the EU or the Swiss Confederation with legal personality, which actively participates in the project and contributes effectively to its implementation. The involvement of the Swiss partner in the implementation of the project is positively perceived and may be given extra points in the project evaluation (see evaluation criteria). **The Swiss partner is not subject to any co-financing obligation and does not bear any exchange rate risks.** The co-financing of the Swiss partner is, where appropriate, to be provided by the lead applicant of the project.

The partners' expenses can be included in the project budget. Partnership agreements must be concluded between the lead applicant and the project partners<sup>2</sup>.

Partnerships can represent an important opportunity to enhance the quality and expand the potential of a project.

Partnership does not and must not replace:

- Providing routine project administration, such as preparing monitoring reports, maintaining accounts, etc. These activities are a standard part of project management but do not, in themselves, define a partnership.
- The provision of standard commercial services available on the market and required during the project (e.g. IT services, marketing services, etc.). Suppliers that typically provide commercial services are not considered partners unless there is a deeper collaboration that adds value beyond traditional services.
- Delivery of goods and construction work.

Partnerships must not be used as a means of circumventing business relations. When selecting suppliers, it is essential to comply with the Public Procurement Act<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Partnership agreements will be submitted prior to the issuance of the Grant Award Decision.

<sup>3</sup> Act No. 134/2016 Coll., on Public Procurement.



## 5. Thematic Focus of the Call and Eligible Activities

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**(a) Enhancing Biodiversity pillar:** projects will focus on landscape and river networks fragmentation to enhance the connectivity of species populations, the favourable state of ecosystems and their functions, and the permeability and stability of the landscape.

Framework definition for project proposals and eligible activities:

**1. Complex projects focused on unblocking migration barriers of selected landscape units for animal groups threatened by environmental fragmentation, including strengthening know-how and professional capacities in this area.**

- Ensuring permeability and lessening fragmentation impact within selected landscape units for specific groups of animals (e.g. renaturation/revitalisation of comprehensive parts of the river basin, linking isolated populations of rare and endangered species by improving the condition or restoration of their biotopes); system solutions of problematic and critical aspects in relation to landscape fragmentation - implementation of the Conception for Unblocking the Czech River Network and improvement of the biotope condition of selected specially protected mammal species, etc.).
- Construction or reconstruction and optimisation of the function of fish passes, eco ducts and other technical facilities and structures designed to ensure the landscape permeability and to reduce mortality of specific groups of organisms (fish, large mammals, amphibians, birds, etc.).

**2. Measures aimed at monitoring the impact of landscape fragmentation on populations of selected species and specific proposals for systematic solutions to the described problem.**

- Tracking (monitoring) and evaluation of the impacts of barriers on the migratory permeability of air, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in landscape and on the mortality of wildlife species (e.g. monitoring the status of selected rare and endangered species together with evaluation of the causes of mortality and the impacts of fragmentation, comprehensive evaluation of animal mortality in relation to specific threatening factors, such as the death of birds when colliding with power lines or monitoring the permeability of river flows for selected fish species), the evaluation of the efficiency of implemented measures to ensure the landscape



permeability or to reduce animal mortality and making a proposal of their optimization.

- Comprehensive proposals (in terms of larger territorial units or entire groups of species) for solutions to problems related to the topic of landscape impermeability, including innovative approaches or transfer of Swiss and other foreign experience to the Czech Republic (e.g. innovative approaches to ensuring the permeability of watercourses and landscapes, alternative technical solutions for migration objects).

In general, the projects will be aimed at reducing the impact of landscape fragmentation caused by human activities (e.g. the presence of transport networks, power lines, cross-barriers in streams, etc.) on groups of animals whose basic life activities include movement (migration) for breeding, searching for new territories, etc. The main aim of these projects is to mitigate environmental fragmentation and, as a consequence, to reduce the fragmentation of species populations and, at the same time, to reduce the mortality of individuals of rare or endangered wildlife species.

Support will be given to complex large-scale projects with significant impact on individual animal groups, addressing the most important barriers or critical aspects and using experience from abroad and the Czech Republic to achieve the most effective solution to the problem.

**(b) Sustainable Tourism pillar:** projects will focus on systematic changes in the management of visitor flows to selected natural sites, taking into account the natural assets and ecosystem services in these sites.

Framework definition for project proposals and eligible activities:

**1. Projects aimed at creating long-term strategic and conceptual solutions for sustainable tourism within large territorial units of high natural value (National parks, Specially Protected Areas, geoparks) providing systemic solutions for sustainable management of these areas and strengthening know-how and professional capacities.**

- Creating SMART solutions in terms of developing incentives for increased use and efficiency of public transport, including the use of Swiss know-how for train transport for access to and movement within the visited locations.
- Distributing tourism to places of lesser natural value - beyond the borders of protected areas or in their buffer zones, etc. by creating alternative attractions, e.g. by improving accessibility to neglected landscape and cultural-historical



destinations, adding the necessary leisure infrastructure (play elements, pedestrian paths including resting places, cycle paths, routes for the disabled), etc.

**2. Measures aimed at monitoring the movement and behaviour of visitors in areas of natural value in order to direct their movement.**

- Visitor monitoring using telemetry, counters or residual data from mobile operators.
- Building microwave system and entrance gates.
- Digital monitoring - strengthening staff (digital rangers) as well as technological capacities.
- Introduction of regulatory and reservation systems

**3. Awareness-raising and education measures with influence of visitors on natural ecosystems.**

- Building or renovating visitor/information centres and houses of nature.
- Creation of programmes and offers for specific groups of visitors (seniors, parents with children, the disabled) including the preparation of exhibitions, educational programmes and awareness campaigns using modern/ innovative forms of interpretation of natural attractions in information centres, houses of nature, etc.
- Support for educational programmes of 'locally anchored learning.
- Solution of visitor infrastructure in localities where the process of preparing the designation of a protected landscape area or national park is underway.

In general, projects aimed at sustainable visitor management in nature conservation sites will be supported, particularly in view of the extreme pressure on ecosystems due to excessive tourism. These projects aim primarily at spreading tourism demand beyond the main tourist destinations and at assessing (monitoring) and regulating the pressure on valuable ecosystems due to intensive tourism.

Support will be given to large-scale, unique projects with significant territorial and societal impact, combining best practice techniques with innovative and demonstrative approaches and offering comprehensive solutions in collaboration with key stakeholders that will lead to measurable change. Projects implemented in cooperation with relevant Swiss institutions, involving destination agencies and volunteers will also be supported.

**Projects may combine the types of measures and activities listed in the framework definition of themes above, but each applicant must assign its project to one pillar, taking into account the predominant focus of the project objectives.**





## 6. Eligibility of Project Expenditure

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An eligible expense is generally one that meets all of the following conditions:

1. it complies with the principles of effectiveness, efficiency and economy pursuant to Act No.320/2001 Coll., on Financial Control in Public Administration and on amendments to Certain Acts, as amended (Financial Control Act) and Act No.218/2000 Coll., on Budgetary Rules and on Amendments to Certain Related Acts, as amended;
2. it was incurred in accordance with the terms of this call;
3. it is necessary for the implementation of the project, directly related to the execution of its activities and aimed at achieving the project objectives;
4. it was incurred and paid by the beneficiary within the specified time period set for project implementation (i.e. for the eligibility of project expenditure) specified in the GAD (This does not apply to expenditure of successful applicants on project documentation related to project activities that were incurred before project implementation and paid during the period from October 1, 2024);
5. it was actually incurred, recorded in the accounting documents of the beneficiary, is identifiable and verifiable, supported by original documentation in accordance with Act No. 563/1991 Coll. on Accounting, as amended.

The project will be financed using a flat rate for fixed expenses of up to 10% of the total amount of personnel expenses, external supplies and services and other direct eligible project expenses.

The following expenses can be financed from the project's lump sum expenditure: overheads, operating and other expenses (rent, energy, heating, water and sewerage, hardware and software for project management purposes, telecommunication services, internet connection, office supplies, data recording media, consumables), insurance, delivery and postal services, organisation of working meetings, promotional items, training and education, vehicle operating expenses, travel, travel allowances, fuel, domestic and international travel.

Lump-sum expenses, the amount of which is determined using a flat rate, do not need to be substantiated by tax, accounting or other documents. Expenditure financed at a flat rate cannot be included as direct project expenditure.

**Value added tax** relating to eligible expenditure is an eligible expenditure if the beneficiary is not liable to pay this tax or is not entitled to deduct this tax.





**Ineligible expenses are:**

- expenditure that has not been specified and approved in the final project proposal,
- expenditure not incurred in accordance with the objectives and activities of the project,
- expenditure not incurred within the timeframe for project implementation,
- expenses incurred outside the Czech Republic and the Swiss Confederation,
- expenditure not supported by appropriate accounting documents,
- fines, financial penalties and legal costs related to the litigation,
- value added tax with tax deduction,
- other expenditure on taxes and administrative charges,
- interest on loans,
- exchange rate losses,
- land purchase.

## **7. Sustainability**

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Sustainability is the period during which beneficiary must maintain the purpose, objectives and outputs of the project. The sustainability of the project will be described in the project description and must be set for a minimum of 5 years. The minimum sustainability period of the project will be specified in the GAD. The project sustainability report will be submitted as part of the project monitoring reports. During the sustainability period, the beneficiary may be required to provide a report on the maintenance of the project's outputs, and compliance with conditions may be verified on-site

## **8. State Aid**

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### **State Aid - Basic Conditions**

Projects submitted by public sector applicants that are non-economic<sup>4</sup> in nature (non-economic activity) and are conducted on their own land do not constitute State Aid.

State-owned enterprises should be considered standard businesses, and therefore the rules for State Aid should apply in situations where the subsidy is directed towards their economic activities.

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<sup>4</sup> The key criterion is that the enterprise does not engage in economic activity, which is defined as any offering of goods and/or services on the market. The enterprise's lack of profitability is not a determining factor.



Non-profit organizations should be evaluated based on their actual activities, that is whether they are engaged in economic or non-economic activities, rather than their legal form.

Support under this call can only be provided in accordance with the regulations governing State Aid, specifically in accordance with:

- Block exemptions pursuant to Articles 14, 36b, 45, 49, 53, 55 and 56 of Commission Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014 of June 17, 2014, declaring certain categories of support compatible with the internal market in accordance with Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union<sup>5</sup> (General Block Exemption Regulation – GBER), or
- Commission Regulation (EU) No. 2023/2831 of December 13, 2023, on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid,
- Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1408/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis aid in the agriculture sector*,
- Commission Regulation (EU) No. 717/2014 of 27 June 2014 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis aid in the fisheries and aquaculture sector*.

Each applicant and their project are assessed individually with regard to the rules on State Aid. In specific cases, we recommend consulting with the grant provider.

## 9. Questions and Consultations

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Questions and consultations can be:

- raised orally by calling the following telephone numbers: +420 267 122 795, +420 267 122 366, +420 267 122 848.
- sent by email to **swiss@mzp.gov.cz**.

Enquiries may be submitted from the date of publication of the open call until 5 working days before the deadline for submission of applications. A reply will be sent to the applicant within 5 working days, but no later than the closing date of the call. A personal consultation can be arranged by telephone using the numbers provided above or via the email address listed.

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<sup>5</sup> When applying block exemptions under specific GBER articles, it is essential to adhere to both the general and specific conditions for projects under the State Aid régime granted by GBER, as outlined in the GBER Regulations. These requirements will also be further detailed in the Guidelines for beneficiaries of the "Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity" Programme.



Frequently asked questions and answers on the call will be published on the website [www.mzp.cz/cz/program\\_svycarsko\\_ceske\\_spoluprace\\_ii](http://www.mzp.cz/cz/program_svycarsko_ceske_spoluprace_ii)

The related programme documents are publicly available and can be downloaded at:

- the Ministry of the Environment website:  
[www.mzp.cz/cz/program\\_svycarsko\\_ceske\\_spoluprace\\_ii](http://www.mzp.cz/cz/program_svycarsko_ceske_spoluprace_ii)
- the website of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic:  
[www.svycarskyprogram.cz](http://www.svycarskyprogram.cz)

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## 10. Annexes to the Call

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- Annex No. 1: Application for support
- Annex No. 2: Project proposal concept - form
- Annex No. 3: Full project application - form
- Annex No. 4: Checklist for assessing formal requirements and general criteria for eligibility



## II. Progress of the call

### 1. Requirements for the Content and Format of the Application

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**The call is conducted in two rounds.** In the first round, the applicant submits, along with the application for support (Annex No. 1 of the call), a project proposal concept (Annex No. 2 of the call). If the applicant's project progresses to the second round, they shall submit a full project application (Annex No. 3 of the call).

#### First round

**The application for support**, together with the **project proposal concept and other relevant annexes** signed by the applicant's statutory representative or their authorised representative (hereinafter referred to as the "authorised person"), must be submitted **by 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at the latest** via a **data box**. The identifier of the mailbox of the Ministry of the Environment is: **9gsaax4**.

The application submitted via data box will contain electronic attachments:

1. A completed application form for support (Annex No. 1 of the call) submitted in PDF format and signed by an authorised person with a valid qualified electronic signature in accordance with Act No. 297/2016 Coll., on Electronic Signature.
2. Power of attorney or other authorization to represent the authorized person, if applicable, in PDF format.
3. Information about the actual owner of the legal entity according to the law governing the registry of beneficial owners, in the form of a complete extract of valid data and data that has been deleted without replacement or with replacement by new data, if it concerns the registering person.
4. A completed project proposal concept (Annex No. 2 of the call) in PDF format and in transcribable DOC/DOCX format.
5. A completed Annex No. 1 of the project proposal concept "Project Framework Budget" in XLS/XLSM format.
6. A completed Annex No. 2 of the project proposal concept "Description of the Involvement of the Swiss Partner" in PDF and DOC/DOCX format.



## Second round

**The full project application** bearing a valid qualified electronic signature of an authorised person in accordance with Act No. 297/2016 Coll., on Electronic Signature must be submitted via **data box no later than the** date to be specified with other conditions in the letter with the notification of the advancement of the project to the second round. The data box identifier of the MoE is: **9gsaax4**.

The full project application will include electronic annexes:

1. A completed full project application form (Annex No. 3 of the call) in PDF format and in transcribable DOC/DOCX format.
2. An Annex No. 1 of the full project application "Detailed Project Budget" in XLS/XLSM format.
3. An Annex No. 2 of the full project application "Declaration of Partner Involvement" in PDF format, if applicable.
4. An Annex No. 3 of the full project application "Selection of State Aid Scheme / Declaration of the Applicant on the State Aid Scheme" in PDF format.
5. An Annex No. 4 of the full project application "Settlement of Comments/Conditions from Round 1" in DOC/DOCX format.

## Both Rounds

The subject line of the data message must read "CALL FOR A SWISS-CZECH COOPERATION PROGRAMME - DO NOT OPEN BEFORE EVALUATION". If the subject of the message is incorrect, the provider shall not be held liable for failure to deliver the message to the Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments of the Ministry of the Environment (hereinafter referred to as 'the Department').

The application must be submitted in the data mailbox system by 23:59:59 on the closing date for receipt of applications.

## 2. Information for Processing the Application

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- The application for support is processed in Czech<sup>6</sup>.
- Expenditure in the application for support and in all project documents will be stated in Czech crowns. For the conversion of expenses for the Swiss partner, the exchange rate of the European Commission valid in the month of the call announcement will be used,

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<sup>6</sup> The exception is Annex No. 4 of the Project proposal concept - Description of the Involvement of the Swiss Partner.



available at [https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelinstenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-infoeuro\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelinstenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-infoeuro_en).

- The concept of the project proposal must contain at least the following information: project title, name of the applicant, proposed partnership structure, project objective, description of proposed activities and outputs, proposed indicators and basic project budget. More detailed information is provided in the project proposal concept form.
- The full project application will contain a detailed description of all the information submitted in the first round of the call. In the full project application, the applicant will describe in detail the planned activities, outputs and indicators of the project, submit a detailed project budget, describe in detail the involvement of individual project partners and provide other required relevant annexes to the application.
- The description of the required information will be limited in number of characters in the first round, but not in the second round.
- Further information can be obtained from the Department of the Environment's website at [www.mzp.cz/cz/program\\_svycarsko\\_ceske\\_spoluprace\\_ii](http://www.mzp.cz/cz/program_svycarsko_ceske_spoluprace_ii) and also by direct enquiry to the Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments (320) at the Department of the Environment's helpdesk: [swiss@mzp.gov.cz](mailto:swiss@mzp.gov.cz) (5 working days before the deadline for submission of applications at the latest).

### 3. Application Evaluation Process

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#### First round of evaluation

The application for support, including the project proposal concept, can be submitted to the Department throughout the duration of the call. Submitted applications will be evaluated in the following steps:

#### 1. Assessment of Compliance with Formal Requirements and General Eligibility Criteria

The application and the project proposal concept will be assessed by the department staff based on the checklist (Annex No. 4 of the call) to ensure compliance with formal requirements and general eligibility criteria.

The assessment of formal requirements will focus on the following aspects:

- submission within the deadline specified in the call;
- submission in the prescribed form, i.e. via a data box;
- a properly titled subject of the data message;
- completion of project implementation no later than 31 December, 2028;



- documents signed by an authorised representative where required;
- authorisation where relevant;
- submission of the mandatory annexes in the required format.

If the department staff find correctable deficiencies in the submitted application and/or project proposal concept regarding formal requirements, they will request the applicant to address these deficiencies or to supplement the application. The deficiencies must be corrected within the specified period of at least five working days from the request for additional information sent to the contact email provided in the application for support.

If the applicant fails to meet non-correctable (irreparable) formal criteria, the grant application will be automatically rejected.

After assessing the formal requirements, the department staff will conduct an eligibility check on the applications. The focus of the check will be on compliance with the eligibility criteria regarding the type of applicant and the location of project implementation as specified in the call (according to the checklist – Annex No. 4 of the call).

**For applications that do not meet the formal requirements or general eligibility criteria within the specified period, even after submitting corrections, the evaluation will be concluded, and the applicant will be sent a notification of exclusion of the project due to non-compliance with the formal and eligibility criteria (affected applicants will be informed of this step by a letter sent via data mailbox).** Objections to this notification can be submitted within 5 working days of its receipt. The applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome of any objections by the Director of the Department.

## 2. Expert assessment of project proposal concepts

If the application, along with the project proposal concept, is formally complete and deemed acceptable based on the eligibility criteria, it is accepted. Accepted applications will then proceed to the expert assessment process.

The project proposal concept will be evaluated by at least two expert evaluators. At least one of the evaluations will be conducted independently of evaluations by sectoral organizations or substantive departments of the Ministry of the Environment (MoE).

Each evaluator must have prior experience in evaluating projects and must demonstrate their expertise by providing a professional resume. The list of nominated evaluators will be approved by the Director General of the Environmental Economics Section of the MoE (hereinafter referred to as the "Director General of the Section").





The evaluation will use a scoring system and evaluation criteria published in the call. The result of the evaluation will be the arithmetic mean of both expert assessments. In case of difference between the two evaluators exceeds 30 points, the project will be forwarded for a third evaluation. The result of the evaluation in such a case will be the arithmetic average of the two expert evaluations which are closest in score (in case of a tie, those which are higher). Each project application can receive a maximum of 100 points. Project applications with a final score of 50 points or more (arithmetic mean) will be forwarded to the Evaluation Committee for further discussion.

The assessment may include proposing conditions that the applicant must meet in order for the project to receive support. These conditions will be discussed by the Evaluation Committee, and acceptance of such conditions must be confirmed by a decision of the Evaluation Committee.

### 3. Assessment of Applications by the Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee will be composed of at least five members. The members of the Evaluation Committee will be representatives of the expert departments of the Ministry of the Environment and, where appropriate, other public expert organisations. The composition of the Evaluation Committee and its members will be confirmed by the Director General of the Section. Representatives of the National Coordination Unit - MoF (NCU) and the Swiss Coordination Office (SCO) may participate in the Evaluation Committee meetings as observers.

The Evaluation Committee will review the submitted projects in order of the final score obtained during the application assessment and will examine the expert opinions of the evaluators. The Evaluation Committee may, in justified cases, adjust the scores of individual projects, such as in cases where:

- The score given by a single expert evaluator is in all cases unduly harsh/soft. In such a case, all ratings of that evaluator will be changed.
- An expert assessment of the project proposal is clearly not in line with the evaluation criteria.

If the Evaluation Committee changes the score of a project (or projects), it must clearly and thoroughly justify its assessment. Such changes will always be documented in the minutes of the Evaluation Committee meeting. The decision on the change is made by the Evaluation Committee through a resolution.



The Evaluation Committee will discuss the conditions proposed by the expert evaluators. The Evaluation Committee may set a condition for each project that the applicant must fulfil in order for the project to be supported.

Based on its assessment, the Evaluation Committee will rank the projects and suggests which projects will advance to the second round. Ideally, the total volume of eligible expenses for the projects advancing to the second round should amount to 200% of the allocation designated for the pillar by this call.

**Furthermore, the Evaluation Committee has the option to decide on reallocating funds between the pillars if there are insufficient high-quality projects in one of the pillars and the allocation for that pillar remains unutilized.**

#### 4. Steering Committee

The voting members of the Programme Steering Committee are representatives of the following institutions: the Swiss Coordination Office, the National Coordination Unit – Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic, and the Program Operator – Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic.

The results of the evaluation process of the first round with the list of projects to be advanced to the second round, together with the list of projects not to be advanced to the second round, will be sent to the members of the Steering Committee (hereinafter referred to as "SC") for approval.

#### 5. Notification of the results of the first round

Applicants are notified in writing of the results of the first-round evaluation via a letter sent through the data mailbox. The letter informing the applicant of the project's advancement or non-advancement to the second round is issued by the Director of the Department. Applicants whose projects advance to the second round are informed about the next steps and the conditions they must meet to qualify for support.

Applicants may submit a reasoned objection to the results of the first-round evaluation to the Department within 5 working days of receiving the notification, in writing, via the data mailbox. If the Director of the Department recommends accepting the objection, the project's advancement to the second round may be confirmed by approval of the Evaluation Committee (per rollam), and the list of projects advancing to the second round will be updated. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of any objections in writing by the Director of the Department.



## Second round of evaluation

The full project application, including annexes confirming compliance with the conditions set out in the first round, may be submitted by the applicant during the entire duration of the time limit set for the second round of the call, i.e. during the period from the delivery of the notification on the result of the first round evaluation to the date of closing the receipt of full project applications.

### 1. Assessment of Compliance with the Formal Requirements

The full project application will be assessed by the department staff based on the checklist (Annex No. 4 of the call) to ensure compliance with formal requirements.

The assessment of formal requirements will focus on the following aspects:

- submission in due time;
- submission in the prescribed form, i.e. via a data box;
- a properly titled subject of the data message;
- completion of project implementation no later than 31 December, 2028;
- documents signed by an authorised representative where required;
- authorisation where relevant;
- submission of the mandatory annexes in the required format.

If the department staff find correctable deficiencies in the submitted full project application regarding formal requirements, they will request the applicant to address these deficiencies or to supplement the application. The deficiencies must be corrected within the specified period of at least five working days from the request for additional information sent to the contact email provided in the application for support.

If the applicant fails to meet non-correctable (irreparable) formal criteria, the grant application will be automatically rejected.

**For applications that do not meet the formal requirements or general eligibility criteria within the specified period, even after submitting corrections, the evaluation will be concluded, and the applicant will be sent a notification of exclusion of the project due to non-compliance with the formal (affected applicants will be informed of this step by a letter sent via data mailbox).** Objections to this notification can be submitted within 5 working days of its receipt. The applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome of any objections by the Director of the Department.



## 2. Expert assessment of full project applications

If the full project application is formally complete, it is referred to the expert evaluation process.

The full project application will be assessed by two expert evaluators, similarly to the first round. Based on the same procedure, an arithmetic mean of the scores will also be obtained, according to which the projects are ranked and submitted to the Evaluation Committee. If the two evaluators' scores differ by more than 30 points, a third evaluation will be conducted. The final score for the project will then be the arithmetic average of the two evaluations that are closest in terms of points. If two evaluations are equal, the higher scores will be used to calculate the average.

At this stage, the expert evaluators will primarily assess whether the full description of the individual actions indicates that the project objectives can be achieved with the expected quality of outputs, within the deadlines and for the expected financial resources. Additionally, compliance with the conditions set by the Evaluation Committee during the first round of evaluation will also be assessed.

As part of the evaluation, conditions may again be proposed by the evaluator that the applicant must meet in order for the project to be supported. These conditions will be further discussed by the Evaluation Committee, and acceptance of such conditions must be confirmed by the Committee's decision.

Subsequently, **all** evaluated applications will be submitted to the Evaluation Committee for further consideration.

## 3. Assessment of Full Project Applications by the Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee will be composed of at least five members. The members of the Evaluation Committee will be representatives of the expert departments of the Ministry of the Environment and, where appropriate, other public expert organisations. Representatives of the National Coordination Unit - MoF (NCU) and the Swiss Coordination Office (SCO) may participate in the Evaluation Committee meetings as observers.

The Evaluation Committee will discuss all full project applications assessed. Based on its assessment, the Evaluation Committee will decide on the ranking of the projects and draw up a list of supported, reserved and unsupported projects.



The Evaluation Committee will review the submitted projects in order of the final score obtained during the application assessment and will examine the expert opinions of the evaluators. The Evaluation Committee may, in justified cases, adjust the scores of individual projects, such as in cases where:

- The score given by a single expert evaluator is in all cases unduly harsh/soft. In such a case, all ratings of that evaluator will be changed.
- An expert assessment of the full project proposal is clearly not in line with the evaluation criteria.

If the Evaluation Committee changes the score of a project (or projects), it must clearly and thoroughly justify its assessment. Such changes will always be documented in the minutes of the Evaluation Committee meeting. The decision on the change is made by the Evaluation Committee through a resolution.

The Evaluation Committee will discuss the conditions proposed by the expert evaluators. The Evaluation Committee may set a condition for each project that the applicant must fulfil in order for the project to be supported. These are always conditions that can ideally be fulfilled based on the decision of a public authority (e.g., a final building permit).

Based on the results of the evaluation and its assessment, the Evaluation Committee will draw up a list of projects to recommend for support, to recommend for support with conditions or grant reduction, to recommend as reserve projects and not to recommend for support. This list of projects shall be submitted to the members of the Steering Committee.

#### 4. Steering Committee

The voting members of the Programme Steering Committee are representatives of the following institutions: The Swiss Coordination Office, the National Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic.

Based on the list submitted by the Evaluation Committee, the Steering Committee (SC) will review the proposed projects and decide on both approved and reserve projects under both pillars of the Programme. If the Steering Committee has reservations about certain projects, it may impose additional conditions for granting financial support. The SC also reserves the right to deny funding for specific projects, provided there is proper justification. The outcomes of the discussion on the recommended projects will be recorded in the minutes of the Steering Committee meeting.



## 5. Notification of the Result of the Evaluation of Full Project Applications

Applicants are notified in writing of the evaluation results of the full project applications from the second round via a letter from the Department Director, announcing the approval or rejection of the application for support from the Programme, sent through the data mailbox system. The results of the second round evaluation cannot be appealed.

The results of the call will also be published on the website of the Ministry of the Environment.

## **4. Grant Award Decision**

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Based on the results of the evaluation of full project applications, a legal act on the provision of support from the Programme will be issued to the applicants by the Director General of the Section.

For supported projects that have no conditions imposed or have fulfilled all conditions, a Grant Award Decision or a similar legal act on the provision of support will be issued<sup>7</sup>.

Other supported projects that are not fully ready for implementation will be given a deadline by the Steering Committee to fulfil the specified conditions, which must not exceed 12 months. If the conditions are not met, reserve projects, in the established order, will be called upon to submit the necessary documents for the issuance of the Grant Award Decision or to submit confirmation of fulfilling the set conditions.

By signing the Grant Award Decision, the final amount of the support is determined, and the relationship between the beneficiary and the grant provider will be governed by this legal act.

The Department may request additional documents before signing the GAD. The GAD will include, but not be limited to, the instructions for submitting financial statements, the terms for submitting progress reports, and the payment schedule.

**The applicant is not legally entitled to the grant.**

## **5. Evaluation criteria**

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Both project proposal concepts and full project applications will be assessed according to the following criteria, which are detailed in the project proposal concept form and the full project

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<sup>7</sup> In case the beneficiary of the project is the state organisational unit, a legal act of project approval is issued.



application form. The form is an integral part of the documentation for this call, as Annex No. 2 (Project Proposal Concept) and Annex No. 3 (Full Project Application). The maximum number of points that can be awarded to a project is 100 points. The evaluation of the applications during rounds 1 and 2 will be based on identical evaluation criteria, the main difference being the level of detail expected from applicants in each round.

The distribution of points between the individual criteria and sub-criteria is as follows:

**Evaluation criteria and sub-criteria (100 points in total):**

- Basic background - *10 points in total*
  - Environmental problem addressed by the project - *6 points*
  - Compliance of the project objectives with environmental legislation, strategic documents and the Programme - *4 points*
- Project impacts - *35 points in total*
  - Objectives and impacts - *25 points*
  - Sustainability - *10 points*
- Implementation - *30 points in total*
  - Description of the Project Implementation (planned activity) - *25 points*
  - Stakeholders and target groups - *5 points*
- Prerequisites- *25 points in total*
  - Swiss-Czech partnership - *6 points*
  - Partnership structure and project management - *5 points*
  - Risk analysis - *5 points*
  - Project budget - *9 points*

**The method of awarding points is as follows:**

The evaluators will award points based on the quality and completeness of the information provided under each sub-criterion. The allocation of points will be determined by assessing the quality of performance according to the percentage scale below. The overall score for each sub-criterion will be expressed in points, with 100 % being the maximum number of points that can be awarded for that sub-criterion.

**Classification of performance according to a percentage scale:**

**1. Excellent performance (76-100%):**

- The description is detailed, comprehensive and contains all relevant information.





- In addition to the narrative, supporting data are provided to substantiate the claims and analyses made in the application.
- All key aspects of the sub-criteria are covered with a high degree of accuracy and relevance.
- The individual descriptions are well justified, with clear links between the arguments presented, supporting data and conclusions. The justifications are consistent, logically structured and directly related to the objectives and requirements of the project.

**2. Good performance (51-75%):**

- The description is detailed and covers most of the relevant information, although some supporting data may be missing or less comprehensive.
- The sub-criterion is generally well described, but some details could be elaborated in more detail.
- Supporting data is present but not fully or insufficiently.

**3. Partial description (26-50 %):**

- The description contains very limited detail and key information is missing or very superficially described.
- Supporting data is insufficient or completely missing, making it difficult to assess the relevance and quality of the information submitted.
- The sub-criterion is only partially covered, which significantly reduces the value of the description provided.

**4. None or very general description (0-25%):**

- The sub-criterion is not described at all or the description is so general that it does not provide any relevant information.
- Any supporting data is lacking and the description lacks specificity and detail.
- Such a description does not provide a sufficient basis for the evaluator to award a higher rating.

## **Evaluation procedure**

The evaluators first review and analyse the information provided for each sub-criterion. Based on the quality, completeness, and supporting data, they will assign scores within the given range. Once the points for each sub-criterion have been allocated, they will be totalled to provide an overall rating for the application. Finally, the evaluator will summarize the assessment and describe the overall project rating.



## 6. Call Timetable

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- Call announcement: **21 November 2024**
- Deadline for submission of applications  
(along with project proposal concepts): **17 February 2024**
- Expected date of announcement of the results of the first round  
of evaluation: **15 April 2025**
- Expected deadline for submission of full project applications under  
the second round of evaluation: **16 June 2025**
- Expected possible start date of project implementation: **1 October 2025**
- Latest date for completion of projects: **31 December 2028**
- End of eligibility of project expenditure: **31 December 2028**