

Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee

for the Support Measure:

'Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Strengthening Biodiversity in Protected Areas'

Preamble

- (1) The Framework Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Swiss Federal Council on the implementation of the second Swiss contribution to selected Member State of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the "Framework Agreement") was concluded on 19 September 2023.
- (2) In line with the Framework Agreement, the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, the Department of EEA and Norway Grants and Swiss Contribution acts on behalf of the Slovak Republic as the National Coordination Unit (hereinafter referred to as the "NCU").
- (3) The Support Measure "Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Strengthening Biodiversity in Protected Areas" (hereinafter referred to as the "Support Measure") was approved by Switzerland on 31st October 2024 and the Support Measure Agreement between the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs was concluded on 6th December 2024.
- (4) The National Coordination Unit has, in line with Article 4.11 of the Regulations on the implementation of the second Swiss Contribution to selected Member States of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the "Regulations"), established the Steering Committee for the Support Measure "Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Strengthening Biodiversity in Protected Areas" (hereinafter referred to as the "Steering Committee") to oversee and steer the implementation of the Support Measure in question.
- (5) The Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "Rules of Procedure") set forth, in particular, the tasks, membership, operation and decision-making of the Steering Committee.

Article 1

Tasks of the Steering Committee

- (1) The Steering Committee shall:
 - (a) oversee the progress and implementation of the Support Measure, discuss key issues regarding its objectives and directions, and take follow-up measures for further action;
 - (b) discuss the progress in achieving outcomes and outputs of the Support Measure, proposals for improvements, including suggestions for Support Measure modifications;
 - (c) approve the Programme Components in accordance with Articles 4.1 and 4.6 of the Regulations;
 - (d) approve in accordance with Article 4.12 paragraph 6 of the Regulations, any modifications to the Support Measure based on the proposal by the Programme Operator and/or the NCU;
 - (e) discuss problems and potential risks of the Support Measure, proposals for their elimination or mitigation, and other measures necessary to achieve the set Support Measure outcomes and outputs;
 - (f) under a procurement value of CHF 140,000.00 in case of goods and services and CHF 350,000.00 in case of construction works, the Steering Committee may delegate the competence to the Programme Operator of deciding on applying the best-price criterion in specific cases, but retains the responsibility for all procurements;
 - (g) comply with any other tasks assigned in the Support Measure Agreement;
 - (h) discuss any other issues as per the approved agenda.

Article 2

Composition of the Steering Committee

- (1) The Steering Committee shall be composed of the following members:

- a) The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as the NCU and the Chair of the Steering Committee with voting right;
 - b) The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as the Programme Operator and the Secretary of the Steering Committee;
 - c) The Swiss Contribution Office (hereinafter referred to as the “SCO”);
 - d) The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic as the Line Ministry for the overall Support Measure with voting right;
 - e) The representative of the Civil Society nominated by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of the Civil Society after consulting the SCO with voting right.
- (2) The members shall designate their representatives. The designation shall proceed in a flexible manner, e.g. by an e-mail addressed to the Chair from the statutory of the member or from a person who should normally be recognised as competent to do so under the organisational structure of the member.
 - (3) The representative may appoint their deputy or deputies by a written notification submitted to the NCU. The deputy shall have the same rights as the representative.

Article 3

The Chair

- (1) The Chair shall:
 - a) manage the activities of the Steering Committee;
 - b) chair the meetings;
 - c) provide for the compliance with this Rules of Procedure;
 - d) give the Secretary other tasks relevant to the work of the Steering Committee.

Article 4

The Secretary

- (1) The Secretary shall:
 - a) handle the administrative tasks including maintaining and updating the list of members’ representatives and distributing relevant information to the members of the Steering Committee;
 - b) organise meetings of the Steering Committee including sending out invitations in the name of the Chair, circulating the draft agenda and other relevant documents;
 - c) elaborate draft minutes of the meetings recording the decisions of the Steering Committee, consult all members on the draft and distribute the jointly agreed and finalised minutes;
 - d) ensure that all relevant documentation is filed and kept;
 - e) perform other tasks assigned by the Chair.

Article 5

Meetings of the Steering Committee

- (1) The Steering Committee shall meet at least once a year. The meetings of the Steering Committee typically take place in person. If a hybrid format allowing remote participation in the meeting is required, the Secretary will arrange it.
- (2) Additional meetings may be held, if deemed necessary or useful, at the request of at least one member of the Steering Committee.
- (3) In particularly justified cases, the Chair may propose on his own or on request of the other Steering Committee member to adopt resolutions by written procedure i.e. via exchange of electronic correspondence. Following steps will be applied:
 - a) The Secretary shall send electronically the draft resolution and supporting documents for consideration to the Steering Committee members.
 - b) If, within 10 working days of sending electronically the draft resolution referred to in letter a), none of the Steering Committee members submits a written objection, the resolution shall be deemed agreed.

- c) The Chair at the next Steering Committee meeting informs about the adoption of the resolution referred to in letter a).
- (4) The Secretary shall make sure that invitations, including the preliminary agenda and relevant documents are sent no later than 10 working days prior to the meeting to all members. The members could propose to add further agenda items within 3 working days after receiving the draft agenda.
- (5) The formal agenda of the meeting must be adopted at the beginning of a Steering Committee meeting.
- (6) The Secretary shall elaborate and circulate the draft minutes no later than 5 working days after the meeting. The deadline for submitting comments for members shall be set by the Secretary for minimum of 7 working days. The jointly agreed and finalised minutes are distributed to all members no later than 20 working days after the meeting.
- (7) The working language of the Steering Committee is English. Translation and interpretation may be provided. The minutes shall be drafted and approved in English.

Article 6

Decision-making within the Steering Committee

- (1) The quorum for a decision is a simple majority of members with voting right and the representative from the Swiss Contribution Office.
- (2) Each member of the Steering Committee with voting right shall have one vote.
- (3) The Steering Committee shall strive for reaching consensus. Otherwise, a simple majority shall be necessary for decisions.
- (4) In case the votes are even, the Chair has a casting vote.
- (5) The Programme Operator shall not have the right to vote.
- (6) The SCO shall not have the right to vote.
- (7) The NCU and the SCO shall have the right to veto any decision taken by the Steering Committee. The veto shall be expressed directly at the Steering Committee meeting and recorded in the draft minutes.
- (8) The decisions of the Steering Committee are effective after the consent with the jointly agreed and finalised minutes is delivered in writing by the last member, or in case of absence of any objection within 5 working days following the distribution of jointly agreed and finalised minutes.

Article 7

Observers

- (1) Any member of the Steering Committee may propose to invite an observer to participate in the Steering Committee meetings, if/when his/her participation is needed for specific issues to be discussed. The observer will be invited with the knowledge of the Chair.
- (2) Any other public or private sector entity of the Slovak Republic and/or from Switzerland with a close thematic, financial or operational connection to the Support Measure could be invited as an observer.
- (3) Observer shall not have neither voting rights nor the right to veto.
- (4) Observers may be provided with the relevant documents circulated for the Steering Committee meeting, including the jointly agreed and finalised minutes.

Article 8

Approval of Programme Components

- (1) Programme Components that are selected after the conclusion of the Support Measure Agreement have to be approved by the Steering Committee, if not otherwise specified in the Support Measure Agreement.
- (2) The Secretary shall provide the members with the following documents:
 - the ranked list of Programme Components Applications, which shall be based on the evaluators' reports (hereinafter referred to as the "Ranking"),
 - the access to the Programme Components applications and evaluators' reports,
 - the list of rejected applications due to non-eligibility or provision of false information in application.
- (3) The Ranking shall be divided into the following three categories:
 - a) Programme Components Applications within the available allocation,
 - b) Programme Components Applications or parts of them to be placed on the reserve list,

- c) Programme Components Applications that are not supported due to insufficient allocation and/or due not meeting the minimum score.
- (4) The Steering Committee shall take decisions on every Programme Component Application under the points a) and b) individually.
- (5) The Steering Committee may approve or reject a Programme Component Application. The Steering Committee may approve a Programme Component Application with conditions and empower the Programme Operator to check their fulfilment prior the signature of the project contract.
- (6) Any changes to the Ranking, including the rejection of a Programme Component Application, shall be duly justified by the members and included in the jointly agreed and finalised minutes.

Article 9

Impartiality, Confidentiality and Prevention of Conflict of Interest

- (1) The members shall refrain from any activity that might be incompatible with the General Principles set forth in Article 2.3 of the Regulations, including, but not limited the prevention and avoidance of conflict of interests.
- (2) A member shall inform the Chair about any conflict of interest occurred. A conflict of interest is deemed to be present when a person involved in an action has direct or indirect interests that are or appear to be incompatible with the impartial and/or objective exercise of the functions related to the action. Such interests may be related to economic interests, political or national affinities, family or emotional ties, or any other shared interests liable to influence the impartial and objective performance of the person involved in an action.
- (3) The Chair, once notified, shall take all the necessary measures to prevent that such a situation related to the conflict of interest affects the integrity of the Steering Committee activities and/or decision-making process.
- (4) The members maintain confidentiality about the discussions and the documents submitted within the Steering Committee.
- (5) The provisions set forth in points (1) to (4) of this Article apply to the observers, as appropriate.

Article 10

Amendments to the Rules of Procedure

- (1) Members of the Steering Committee may propose amendments to this Rules of Procedure.
- (2) The proposed amendments shall be discussed within the Steering Committee.
- (3) The Rules of Procedures shall be amended by a numbered amendment.

Article 11

Entry into Force

- (1) Unless a different date is specified in the finalized minutes, these Rules of Procedure shall come into effect on the date of its signature by the Chair.
- (2) Any amendments shall come into effect on the date the jointly agreed and finalized minutes from the respective meeting take effect.