



**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**  
**STRENGTHENING BIODIVERSITY IN PROTECTED AREAS**  
**(SK - BIODIVERSITY)**  
Swiss Contribution  
**SLOVAKIA**

**1. BASIC DATA AND CONDITIONS**

The **aim** of the Call for proposals Strengthening Biodiversity in Protected Areas (SK – BIODIVERSITY) (hereinafter referred to as “the Call”) is **to support** Programme Components focused on **ecosystem and biodiversity protection in and around protected areas** in Slovakia. For the purposes of this Call, protected areas are considered to be the **territories of National parks** and their protective zone and the **territories of Protected Landscape Areas** (see Annex 5), excluding Protected Landscape Areas in the territory of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region. The main **objective** of the Programme Components shall be **biodiversity conservation** – i.e. protection, management and restoration of species, habitats and ecological processes, addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Programme Components will be implemented through activities such as:

- improving the status of habitats,
- applying nature-based management,
- conducting educational and awareness-raising initiatives on environmental protection,
- and other measures contributing to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem protection.

**Involvement of the local people** in the activities for ecosystem and biodiversity protection shall be an important part of how to contribute to strengthening ecosystems and biodiversity.

<b>Call launching:</b>	13 February 2025
<b>Call closure:</b>	2 June 2025, 23:59 CEST
<b>Call number:</b>	BIO02
<b>Programme outcome(s):</b>	The protection of ecosystems enhanced and their resilience to threats to the biodiversity loss increased
<b>Programme output(s):</b>	Pilot activities and measures for the biodiversity protection mapped, developed, tested and implemented Environmental education and Awareness raising activities about biodiversity conservation and sustainable forms of tourist services developed Local people involved in activities for ecosystem and biodiversity protection
<b>Maximum project grant to be applied for:</b>	EUR 500,000
<b>Minimum project grant to be applied for:</b>	EUR 200,000
<b>Co-financing:</b>	5% co-financing is required.
<b>Total allocation:</b>	EUR 3,150,000
<b>Announced by:</b>	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic



<p><b>Eligible applicants<sup>1</sup>:</b></p>	<p>Organizations: national administration, regional administration (including associations), local administration (including associations and cities), university/academical and school, NGO/non-profit established as a legal person in Slovakia active in the field of environment protection.</p> <p>The Applicant must demonstrate its activities in the field of environment protection for at least the last year preceding the announcement of the Call. The Ministry of Environment of the SR and the Slovak National Parks Administrations (hereinafter also referred to as “NPAs”) are not eligible to apply for grant.</p>
<p><b>Eligible partners<sup>1</sup>:</b></p>	<p>Organizations: national administration, regional administration (including associations), local administration (including associations and cities), university/academical and school, NGO/non-profit, private sector and other established as a legal person either in Switzerland or Slovakia and international organizations to be actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a Programme Component, are considered eligible Programme Component partners.</p> <p>The Ministry of Environment of the SR is not eligible to become a Partner in any of the Programme Components selected in the Call. Any of the nine Slovak NPAs may become Partners in the Programme Components selected under the call; however, they cannot be awarded project grant.</p>
<p><b>Eligible areas<sup>2</sup>:</b></p>	<p>The activities can be implemented on the territory of the whole of Slovakia, except for the Bratislava Self-governing Region.</p>
<p><b>Further conditions:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Programme Components’ main objective must be <b>biodiversity conservation</b> and implementation of <b>field area-based conservation measures</b> contributing to effectively protecting species and habitats in the wild implemented <b>directly in the protected area/-s in Slovakia</b>. For the purposes of this Call, protected areas are considered to be the <b>territories of National parks</b> and their protective zone and the <b>territories of Protected Landscape Areas</b> (see Annex 5), excluding Protected Landscape Areas in the territory of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region.</li> <li>2. The Programme Components must include <b>involvement of the local people</b> in the environmental education and/or in activities focused on environment conservation/protection.</li> <li>3. The mandatory attachments to the Application are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Documents demonstrating the Applicant’s activities in the field of environmental protection for at least the last year preceding the announcement of the Call,</li> <li>b) Partnership statement, letter of intent or other similar documents proving the partner's interest in participating in the Programme Component, if the Programme Component is planned to be implemented in partnership,</li> <li>c) Title deeds for all properties on which construction work will take place (to be assessed as part of the Programme Component), if relevant,</li> <li>d) Documents proving Local Community consultations.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<sup>1</sup> Division of legal forms into sectors can be found in Table 2 in [Projects Implementation Manual](#)

<sup>2</sup> This does not exclude bilateral cooperation and study trips abroad, if relevant.



	<p>4. The Programme Components shall be implemented in line with applicable state aid rules.</p> <p>5. The involvement of a Swiss partner in the implementation of a Programme Component is positively perceived and may be given extra points in the Programme Component evaluation (see Annex 2 Selection criteria).</p>
<b>Funding source(s):</b>	Swiss Contribution and State Budget of the SR

## 2. CONTEXT

The **Swiss-Slovak Cooperation Programme** is implemented based on [the Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Slovak Republic on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to selected EU Member States to reduce economic and social disparities within the EU](#) (hereinafter also referred to as “the Framework Agreement”), signed on 19 September 2023. The conclusion of the Framework Agreement allows the Slovak Republic to receive funds from the Second Swiss Contribution under the so-called cohesion allocation of CHF 44.2 million (approx. EUR 46.41 million), of which CHF 22.8 million has been allocated for the Environment and Climate Protection area (approx. EUR 23.94 million).

The basic framework of the "Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Strengthening Biodiversity in Protected Areas" 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 Annex of the Framework Agreement - Country-Specific Set-up.

The Programme was approved by the Swiss authorities on 31 October 2024. The [Support Measure Agreement was](#) signed on 6 December 2024.

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](#) (hereinafter also referred to as “the Regulation”), the Framework Agreement, the Support Measure Agreement and [other implementing programme documents](#).

### "PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND STRENGTHENING BIODIVERSITY IN PROTECTED AREAS" PROGRAMME (SK-BIODIVERSITY)

The Programme is implemented by the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic as the Programme Operator. The cooperating entity is the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic as the line Ministry.

The **objective** of the Programme is **to protect the environment and the climate** through the development and implementation of sustainable tourism and creation of conditions for ecosystem protection and strengthening biodiversity in and around protected areas across Slovakia. This objective is pursued through two complementary Components, both focusing on **nature protection by strengthening biodiversity and enhancing the protection of ecosystem and habitats**.

#### Programme Component 1 [“Tourists and Nature Come Together”](#)

The Component focuses on **sustainable tourism management in Slovakia’s national parks**. Key activities include tourists’ regulation and directing visitors to lesser-known locations through sustainable tourism offers. These measures aim to **reduce the burden on nature** in highly stressed areas, allowing the **habitats to recover**, thereby **enhancing ecosystem and biodiversity** in protected areas. The Component also incorporates environmental education, ecosystem and biodiversity protection, and improvement in nature conservation and sustainable tourism governance.



Programme Component 1 is implemented by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic in collaboration with nine Slovak NPAs. The Swiss Programme Component Partner is the Zürich University of Applied Sciences, Institute of Natural Resource Sciences, Tourism and Sustainable Development Research Group.

### **Component 2: Call for Proposals**

The Call builds on the foundation laid by Programme Component 1, focusing on the implementation of specific measures in protected areas that complement national parks. These measures directly address the loss of biodiversity, supporting the broader goal of halting its decline.

The synergy between the two components ensures that conservation and sustainable tourism function as complementary pillars of protected area management. While Component 1 focuses on sustainable tourism to relieve stress on ecosystems, Component 2 implements targeted conservation actions. Together, they contribute to preserving valuable nature, strengthening ecosystem functions, and improving the quality of life for people. Sustainable tourism not only educates the public and fosters a connection with nature but also garners support for conservation efforts.

## **3. CALL EXPECTATIONS**

The combined effects of climate change, nature degradation, water scarcity, unsustainable agriculture and forestry, as well as other externalities have led to a biodiversity crisis. Right now, a million species are at risk of extinction. People must act; otherwise, ecosystem collapse threatens to destroy irreplaceable animals and plants. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization reports that biodiversity loss threatens the security of the world's food supplies and the livelihoods of millions. **Regeneration** of our ecosystem and **prevention of further biodiversity loss** is necessary.

The ambition of the Call is to **enhance the ecosystems protection** and **increase their resilience to threats to the biodiversity loss**. Through the Call, the initiatives on conservation and/or restoration of biodiversity in protected areas in Slovakia shall be selected for support.

**Non-profit organizations and public entities** actively acting in the field of environment protection play a central role in international conservation efforts: they are **essential partners** in achieving the global objective of halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity.

**The cooperation** of entities active in the field of environment protection is foreseen in order to implement **wide range of green-based management measures** and increase awareness and education with the aim to **protect the habitat of specific species** or vulnerable/endangered ecosystems.

Transformation to a sustainable way of life involves many areas of society. For nature-based climate action to be successful, the partners are needed. Biodiversity is mostly about local ecosystems and promoting healthy conditions for organism to thrive. The supported Programme Components should educate public, create relationship to nature and bring support for nature conservation. There is a lot everyone can do to promote and preserve local biodiversity. That is why **involvement of local communities** is important.

In protected areas in Slovakia, the supported Programme Components shall implement **meaningful actions** on:

- identification and conservation of vulnerable species of plants and animals in their nature,
- reducing threats to animals and plant species,
- developing and maintaining the protected areas like national parks, sanctuaries to protect the endangered and critical species etc.,



- landscape restoration, reforestation, carbon sequestration, wildlife protection and water preservation, efficient water management, wetland restoration, and other habitat (peatland, meadow etc.) rehabilitation efforts,
- sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management, combating desertification and halting and reversing land degradation,
- elimination of the negative impact of tourism on nature,
- efficient utilization of the resources,
- prevention of poaching of wild animals,
- involvement of the local communities in the conservation effort,
- following the sustainable agriculture practice,
- reducing the levels of pollutants,
- prohibition of deforestation,
- enhancing ecosystem services,
- following the environmental laws etc.,
- awareness-raising about the biodiversity conservation and its importance etc.

The Applicants are **encouraged to reach out to the vulnerable groups**, minorities and other socially marginalized groups, including Roma communities, people with disabilities, elderly and children, whenever possible include them into mainstream activities and providing special initiatives or programs for them, when necessary.

The Applicants are also encouraged to **Slovak-Swiss cooperation** with the aim of **strengthening the bilateral relationship in the area of biodiversity conservation**, as well as mutually sharing experience, know-how and best practices.

The supported Programme Components shall implement **measures on biodiversity conservation**. The **mandatory** and **main part** of the Programme Components shall be **implementation of field area-based conservation measures contributing to effectively protecting species and habitats in the protected areas in Slovakia**. Pilot initiatives, as well as replication and/or enhancement of proven good practices are expected. **Involvement of the local people** in implementation of the biodiversity conservation measures and/or environmental education is **mandatory**.

Other initiatives addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, awareness-raising activities and environmental education on biodiversity protection etc. are an optional part of the Programme Component.

#### **4. LOGFRAME**

Programme Components supported under the Programme contribute to the Programme Objective defined as **“Protecting the environment and the climate”**. Programme Components supported under the Call contribute to Programme Outcome defined as *“The protection of ecosystems enhanced and their resilience to threats to the biodiversity loss increased”* and to three outputs 2.1 *“Environmental education and Awareness raising activities about biodiversity conservation and sustainable forms of tourist services developed”*, 2.2 *“Local people involved in activities for ecosystem and biodiversity protection”* and 2.3 *“Pilot initiatives and measures for the biodiversity protection mapped, developed, tested and implemented”*.

In the Application Form, Applicants are required to set target values for the Programme Outcome and Output Indicators that their Programme Component is supposed to contribute to:

For mandatory indicators, target values must be provided.



If a specific indicator is not relevant to the proposed Programme Component, Applicants should set the target value to 0.

**Outcome indicators:**

At outcome indicators level, the Programme Components must contribute to indicator 2.3 and at the same time to indicator 2.1 or 2.2 or both (2.1 and 2.2).

Outcome 2: The protection of ecosystems enhanced and their resilience to threats to the biodiversity loss increased

- **Indicator option A – 2.1 Number of specific species which have been protected by the Programme**

Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of particular animal or plant species that have received conservation efforts or protection as a result of the Programme. This includes species that are actively monitored, managed, or supported through various conservation actions aimed at preserving their populations and habitats. The protection may involve measures such as habitat preservation, management practices, legal safeguards, or other targeted actions designed to ensure the survival and well-being of these species.

Examples of the measures:

creation of protective corridors for safe movement of species between different habitats, habitat protection from tourism and construction activities, population monitoring programs, research into the impact of climate change on the environment of a specific species, poaching control, maintenance and restoration of natural habitats and tourism management, restoration of degraded ecosystems, restoration and maintenance of wetlands and watercourses, installation and maintenance of artificial nesting sites, creating protective zones around nests and burrows, ensuring grazing and mowing to preserve meadow habitats, introduction of anti-erosion measures on slopes and river banks, reduction or elimination of invasive species, etc.

- **Indicator option B – 2.2 Number of hectares of ecosystems conserved, restored and/or sustainably managed**

Definition: The indicator refers to the hectares of protected areas where enhanced management practices have resulted in the improved condition and health of natural habitats. It indicates the extent of protected areas that have benefited from such management efforts, leading to positive results for the ecosystems and species within these areas.

- **Mandatory indicator – 2.3 Number of local people involved in ecosystem protection in supported protected areas (disaggregated by gender, disadvantaged groups)**

Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of local people, who are actively engaged in activities aimed at conserving and protecting local ecosystems (involvement of local people from the surrounding area is expected). This involvement may include participation in conservation projects, environmental monitoring, habitat restoration, or other initiatives focused on preserving the natural environment within the protected areas.

The number of people is an educated guess, which means that the figure is based on expert judgement and analysis of available data, rather than an exact number. This estimate is usually based on experience, available data, or relevant information that allows qualified experts to determine the approximate number of people who participated in, were involved in, or were affected by the activity or event.

**Output Indicators:**

Output 2.1 Environmental education and Awareness raising activities about biodiversity conservation and sustainable forms of tourist services developed

- **2.1.1 Number of events targeting environmental education and biodiversity conservation held**

Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of organized activities, such as workshops, seminars, training sessions, or public awareness campaigns, that are specifically focused on educating participants about environmental issues and promoting the conservation of biodiversity. These events aim to raise awareness, provide knowledge, and encourage actions that contribute to the protection and preservation of ecosystems and species.



- **2.1.3 Number of municipalities in protected areas in which local people have been provided with the environmental education**  
Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of municipalities located within or around protected areas where residents have received educational programs focused on environmental issues. These programs aim to increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of environmental conservation, sustainable practices, and the importance of protecting local ecosystems among the local population. It also includes environmental education at schools, kindergarten and other educational facilities.
- **2.1.4 Number of different target groups to which the environmental education and awareness raising activities are targeted**  
Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of distinct groups or segments of the population that are specifically addressed by programs or initiatives focused on environmental education and awareness. These target groups may include children, students, local communities, businesses, tourists, or other specific audiences (such as the blind and partially sighted people). The goal is to tailor educational and awareness efforts to the needs and characteristics of each group to effectively promote environmental conservation and sustainable practices.  
E. g. college and university students, secondary school students, elementary school students, local residents, tourists/visitors, nature guard etc.
- **2.1.5 Number of schools which have been provided with the education activities**  
Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of educational institutions that have received or participated in specific educational programs, workshops, or activities. These activities are designed to enhance students' knowledge, skills, or awareness on particular topics, such as environmental conservation, sustainability, or other relevant subjects.

## Output 2.2 Local people involved in activities for ecosystem and biodiversity protection

- **Mandatory indicator - 2.2.1 Number of Programme Components supported that have conducted consultations with the local community**  
Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of specific Programme Components proposals that have received support and have engaged in direct consultations with local community members related to the Programme Component content. These consultations typically involve gathering input, feedback, and opinions from the community to ensure that their perspectives are considered in the planning and implementation of the supported activities.
- **Mandatory indicator – 2.2.2 CIV\_CI\_3 Number of volunteers mobilized (disaggregated by gender, disadvantaged groups)**  
Definition: The indicator counts number of persons mobilised in voluntary engagement aimed at preserving and safeguarding the environment. This involvement may include participation in conservation efforts, habitat restoration, environmental monitoring, or other initiatives focused on protecting the natural environment.
- **2.2.3 Number of local people educated in environment protection (disaggregated by gender, disadvantaged groups)**  
Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of individuals from a specific area or community who have completed formal training or education on environmental protection. This education may include learning about conservation practices, sustainable resource management, pollution prevention, and other topics to protect and preserve the environment. The goal is to equip local residents with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute to environmental sustainability. This includes educational programs, courses or training sessions specifically designated for a targeted group of people. It also includes specific trainings for people to implement particular



measures of environment protection and environment education at schools, kindergartens and other educational institutions. Participation is typically documented through methods like attendance sheets or certificates. This indicator does not include open, large-scale educational events intended for the general public or random participants.

## Output 2.3 Pilot initiatives and measures for the biodiversity protection mapped, developed, tested and implemented

- **Mandatory indicator – 2.3.1 Number of green-based management measures and pilot initiatives on conservation and/or restoration of natural habitats implemented in protected areas**

Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of environmentally focused strategies or actions that have been put into practice within protected areas to conserve and enhance natural habitats, including initiatives or programs specifically designed to test and evaluate new methods or strategies (new approaches, techniques, or solutions) for conserving or restoring biodiversity. The measures are designed to promote sustainability, reduce negative environmental impact, and maintain the health and functionality of ecosystems. Examples of such measures might include habitat restoration projects, sustainable land-use practices, and management plans that prioritize ecological balance.

E.g. habitats restoration initiatives, invasive species control, sustainable grazing management, controlled burns, water management initiatives, creation of wildlife corridors, ecosystem monitoring and management plans; sustainable tourism practices, community engagement and educational programs, pollution management measures etc.

The pilot initiatives are conducted on smaller scale testing their effectiveness, feasibility, and impact before considering broader application or full-scale implementation. Publication of results or evaluation reports is mandatory online.

- **2.3.2 Number of measures supporting elements of green infrastructure at the local level in protected areas**

Definition: The indicator refers to how many specific actions are taken to improve and maintain green infrastructure, i.e. using natural features like parks, forests, and wetlands to provide benefits like clean air, water management, and wildlife habitats, within protected areas. These are the actions aimed at helping these natural features work better.

The aim is to carry out initiatives that make green infrastructure in protected areas better, which helps support wildlife, maintain clean water and air, and improve the overall health of the environment.

E.g. tree planting, wetland restoration, creating wildlife corridors, building green roofs, establishing native based gardens, improving trail design, installing rain gardens, creating buffer zones etc.

- **Mandatory indicator – 2.3.3 Number of institutions active in the field of environment protection, which activities are supported by the Programme**

Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of organizations and institutions that are engaged in activities related to preserving, conserving, and improving the natural environment. Their work might involve activities on wildlife conservation, pollution control, habitat restoration, and other environmental initiatives and are receiving assistance, funding and resources from the Programme.

The goal is to track and report the number of institutions that are being supported by the Programme to enhance their capacity and effectiveness in protecting the environment.

- **2.3.4 Number of Programme Components implemented in multi-level and/or multi-stakeholder local partnerships<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> Multi-level means partnership between various levels of public administration (national, regional, local). Multi-stakeholder means partnership between organisations from different sector (public sector, civil society sector, private sector etc.).





Definition: The indicator refers to the total count of specific Programme Components that have been supported as part of collaborative efforts involving multiple levels of governance and/or diverse stakeholders within local partnerships.

- **Mandatory indicator – 2.3.5 Number of municipalities in protected areas in which pilot activities and measures for the biodiversity protection are implemented**

Definition: The Indicator refers to the total count of municipalities within protected areas (according to cadastral territory) where pilot initiatives and other measures aimed at preserving and enhancing biodiversity have been carried out.

The full results Logframe of the Programme is listed in the Support Measure Agreement.

## 5. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The project grant should primarily support area-based conservation measures directly implemented in protected areas to effectively protect species in the wild. The next key parts of the Programme Component can include raising awareness and providing environmental education, as well as involving local communities in biodiversity protection activities.

### **Mandatory Activities:**

#### 1. **Field Area-Based Conservation Measures**

Each Programme Component must include at least one activity focused on implementing field area-based conservation measures directly in a locality of protected areas to effectively protect species and habitats.

#### 2. **Involvement of Local stakeholders**

The involvement of local stakeholders must be an integral part of the Programme Component. This can be achieved through direct participation in biodiversity conservation measures, environmental education, or other relevant activities.

If the Programme Component is implemented in collaboration with a Swiss Programme Component partner, the Programme Component must include a separate cross-cutting activity exclusively dedicated to the Swiss Programme Component partner. This activity should be titled **“Bilateral Cooperation”** and should focus on fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and sharing of best practices between the Slovak and Swiss entities etc.

Applicants are encouraged to integrate these mandatory elements into their proposed activities while ensuring they align with the overall objectives and do not exceed the maximum of 8 activities.

Some examples of other Eligible Activities and Initiatives:

#### 1. **Targeted Conservation Actions:**

- Implement specific measures to support the protection and conservation of threatened and declining species and habitats.
- Restore habitats to improve conditions for species at risk.
- Identify and apply the best practices for protecting threatened or declining species and habitats.

#### 2. **Water and Soil Management:**



- Implement measures to mitigate eutrophication, such as reducing the overuse of fertilizers on farmland and improving sewage treatment to prevent leaks into rivers and streams.
  - Increase the size and diversity of wetlands, estuaries, and riverside natural areas.
  - Work on restoring near-natural water balance by reconnecting floodplains, restoring water bodies, and rewetting peatlands and other wetlands.
  - Encourage soil conservation and promote soil-friendly management practices.
- 3. Pollution Control:**
- Improve sewage treatment facilities and regulate septic tanks to prevent water pollution.
  - take measures to prevent river pollution, ensuring cleaner waterways.
- 4. Awareness and Education:**
- Raise awareness among stakeholders and the wider public about key pressures on species and habitats.
  - Educate individuals on how they can contribute to biodiversity protection.
- 5. Forest and Habitat Restoration:**
- Support the systematic conversion of non-resilient forests to climate-resilient, near-natural mixed forests.
  - Expand forest cover through planting additional trees and converting coniferous plantations.
  - Restore damaged forest areas and improve habitat connectivity for wildlife.
- 6. Recreational Impact Management:**
- Restore and rehabilitate hiking trails and the surrounding biotopes that have been damaged by mass tourism.
  - Monitor and manage biotopes to protect sensitive areas from further degradation.
- 7. Biodiversity Monitoring and Coordination:**
- Enhance the monitoring of species, habitats, and environmental pressures, and improve information sharing among stakeholders.
  - Protect breeding sites and migration corridors to ensure species can thrive in their natural habitats.

These activities aim to protect and restore biodiversity, enhance ecosystem resilience, and promote sustainable management practices within protected areas in Slovakia.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult and involve relevant NPAs and Administrations of Protected Landscape Areas (hereinafter also referred to as “PLA”) and other relevant Administrations (if relevant for the Programme Component) in the design and implementation of activities. This is particularly important because:

1. Activities are to be implemented on the territory of the National Parks and their protective zones, or on the territory of the PLA, where these administrations play a key role in the management and conservation of the respective territories.
2. NPAs and PLA Administrations often conduct their own activities in these areas. Coordination ensures mutual awareness of planned initiatives, avoids overlap, and maximizes the effectiveness of conservation measures.
3. Certain activities may require approvals, permits, or specific agreements from the relevant NPAs or LDA Administrations or other relevant Administrations. Early engagement helps ensure that all necessary permissions are obtained in a timely manner and that activities align with the legal and management frameworks governing these areas.



Applicants are advised to proactively engage with NPAs and LDA Administrations during the proposal preparation phase to:

- Ensure alignment with local conservation objectives and management strategies.
- Facilitate smooth implementation of activities.
- Strengthen the overall impact and sustainability of the proposed measures.

## **6. SELECTION CRITERIA AND PRIORITISED PROGRAMME COMPONENTS**

When selecting Programme Components for funding, priority will be given to those that most closely align with the following key priorities, ensuring a strong contribution to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem resilience:

- Conservation efforts in protected areas with direct and measurable benefits for biodiversity.
- Community-based conservation involving local and marginalised groups.
- Joint Programme Components with Slovak-Swiss partnership and strong ecological impact.

Programme Components that best meet these priorities according to the table in Annex 2 (Selection criteria), show effective community involvement, demonstrate direct impact, strong partnerships and effective management, and achieve specific conservation objectives will be most likely to be supported.

## **7. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES**

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. 357/2015 on Financial Control and Auditing and on Amendments to Certain Laws and Act No. 523/2004 Coll. on Budget Rules of the Public Service and of Change and Amendment of Some Acts;
2. it was incurred in accordance with the terms of this call;
3. it is necessary for the implementation of the Programme Component, directly related to the execution of its activities and aimed at achieving the Programme Component objectives;
4. it was incurred and paid by the Programme Component Operator or Programme Component Partner within the specified time period set for Programme Component implementation;
5. it was actually incurred, recorded in the accounting documents of the Programme Component Operator or Programme Component Partner, is identifiable and verifiable, supported by original documentation in accordance with Act No. 431/2002 Coll. on Accounting as amended and on amendments of some acts.

Except for the so-called “ineligible expenditures” listed in Article 6.6 of the [Regulation](#), all types of expenditures may be eligible, provided that they meet the conditions listed in this Call and in Article 6.1 and 6.2 of the Regulation<sup>4</sup>.

The period of eligibility of expenditure for each Programme Component will be set out in the Programme Component Contract. As a rule, expenditure under a Programme Component is eligible

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<sup>4</sup> More information can also be found in the [Projects Implementation Manual](#).



from the date of the decision on approval of the Programme Component by the Steering Committee for the Programme. Expenditure may be eligible until 31 December 2028.

Expenditure shall be deemed to have been incurred when the subject matter of the expenditure has been delivered (in the case of goods) or performed (in the case of services and works), invoiced and paid for. In exceptional cases where the subject of the expenditure has been delivered or performed in the last month of the eligibility period, expenditure shall be deemed to have been incurred within the eligibility period even if the invoice was issued in the month immediately following the end of the eligibility period and paid within 30 calendar days of the date of issue.

The grant rate of the Programme Components is 95% for all Applicants.

Office and administrative expenses are part of a flat rate and their expenditure is not proven. Office and administrative costs are reimbursed at the flat rate of 7% of the eligible direct costs for staff employed under the Programme Component, as specified in the Programme Component Contract. Office and administrative costs shall be limited to the elements listed in chapter D, point 8.6.3 of the [Projects Implementation Manual](#). No other form of reimbursement is possible, and these types of costs are not covered under any other cost categories.

Flat rates for foreign and domestic business/work trips are eligible. The rules for using flat rates are set out in the [Projects Implementation Manual](#).

Within each Programme Component, one general item called Reserve in the amount of 5% of the Total Eligible Expenditure of the Programme Component shall be obligatory, and the following expenses shall be financed from this item in particular:

- (a) expenditure on audits that may be required by the Audit Authority,
- (b) expenditure on translations of tender documents, if requested by the Swiss Party,
- (c) expenditure on reports by an independent auditor or a qualified and independent public official<sup>5</sup>,
- (d) a provision for foreign exchange losses of the Swiss counterparts,
- (e) other expenses for unforeseen circumstances.

Value added tax relating to eligible expenditure is an eligible expenditure if the Programme Component Operator is not liable to pay this tax or is not entitled to deduct this tax.

Swiss and international organisations whose primary seat is outside Slovakia shall submit a report from an independent auditor authorised to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents, confirming that the claimed expenditure has been incurred in accordance with the Regulation, national legislation and relevant national accounting practices. This report shall be considered sufficient proof of the expenditure incurred.

## 8. MILESTONES AND TIMEFRAME

Event/Milestone	Deadline
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<sup>5</sup> According to Articles 6.8.4 and 6.8.5 of the Regulations.



Call launching	13 February 2025
Expected Date of Information Day on the Call (online)	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of March 2025
Deadline to submit form "Search for Swiss partner contact" (see Annex 4)	7 April 2025, 23:59 CEST
<b>Call closure – deadline for submission of applications</b>	<b>2 June 2025, 23:59 CEST</b>
Expected date of announcement of the results of the Call	31 July 2025
Expected possible start date of Programme Component implementation	15 August 2025
Latest date for completion of Programme Component	31 December 2028
<b>End of eligibility of Programme Component expenditure</b>	<b>31 December 2028</b>
<b>Deadline for submission Last Payment Application (Final Project Report)</b>	<b>15 January 2029</b>

## 9. PARTNERSHIP

Programme Components can be implemented alone or in partnership. A Programme Component partner may be an organization of type: national administration, regional administration (including associations), local administration (including associations and cities), university/academic and school, NGO/non-profit, private sector and other established as a legal person either in Switzerland or Slovakia and international organizations which actively participates in the Programme Component and contributes effectively to its implementation<sup>6</sup>.

A Programme Component application can have up to four Programme Component Partners.

**Partnership statement, letter of intent or other similar documents** proving the Partner's interest in participating in the Programme Component shall be submitted along with the Application. The document should be signed and submitted as a scanned version or .PDF version, if a digital signature is integrated.

The involvement of the Swiss partner in the implementation of the Programme Component is positively perceived and may be given extra points in the Programme Component evaluation (see Selection criteria – Annex 2). The Swiss partner is not subject to any co-financing obligation and does not bear any exchange rate risks. The Applicant shall provide the co-financing of the Programme Component for the Swiss Programme Component partner.

The Programme Component partners' expenses can be included in the Programme Component budget. Expenditure by Swiss Programme Component Partners is reported under a separate Activity. Partnership agreements must be concluded between the applicant and the Programme Component partner/-s.

Partnership agreements with financially participating partners will be submitted at the latest before the first payment is made to the Programme Component Operator.

The Partnership Agreement concluded with the Programme Component Partner from Switzerland, the Partnership Agreement must contain, inter alia, the provisions under point 4.10.2 of the Regulation, must be concluded in English, and must not contain a commitment by the Programme Component Partner from Switzerland to co-finance the Programme Components. The Programme Operator shall only verify the existence of the Partnership Agreement. If the Partnership Agreement is concluded with

<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Environment of the SR is not eligible to become a Partner in any of the Programme Components selected in the Call. Any of the nine Slovak National Parks Administrations may become Partners in the Programme Components selected under the call; however, they cannot be awarded project grant.



a Programme Component Partner from Switzerland, the Programme Operator shall verify that the Partnership Agreement meets the conditions under the previous sentence.

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

Partnership does not and must not replace:

- Providing routine Programme Component administration, such as preparing reports, maintaining accounts, etc. These activities are a standard part of Programme Component management but do not, in themselves, define a partnership.
- The provision of standard commercial services available on the market and required during the Programme Component (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>7</sup>.

In relation to the Programme Operator, it is important to realise that the Applicant is responsible for all commitments and irregularities of the Partner.

## **10. FACILITATING PARTNERSHIP WITH SWISS ENTITIES**

One of the objectives of the Swiss Contribution is to strengthen the bilateral relations with the Swiss entities. Partnership Programme Components with organisations from Switzerland are strongly encouraged.

Programme Component partners from Switzerland shall be actively involved in the development of the Programme Component and effectively contribute to its implementation. The eligible activities in cooperation with the Swiss Programme Component partner within the Programme Component are e.g. skills sharing, examples of good practise and know-how transfer, joint workshops, study trips, studies and other bilateral activities supporting the objective, outcome and outputs achievement.

To facilitate the identification and establishment of partnerships between Slovak and Swiss entities, the Programme Operator, in cooperation with the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, has provided possible assistance to Applicants in finding a suitable Swiss Programme Component partner to implement their Programme Component, through the non-profit organisation Swiss Parks Network.

If Applicants are interested in using the possibility to find a partner through Swiss Parks Network, they should fill in the Search for Swiss partner Contact form (see Annex 4). The Search for Swiss partner Contact form should be signed and submitted as PDF with copyable text or scanned version along with the .doc/.docx format and sent to the Programme Operator at [swiss-contribution@mirri.gov.sk](mailto:swiss-contribution@mirri.gov.sk).

The completed Search for Swiss partner Contact form can be submitted until 7 April 2025 23:59 CEST at the latest. The expected reaction time is around 3 weeks. Contacts provided via the "Search for Swiss partner Contact form" do not mean any legal obligations, neither from the Applicant's, nor from the Swiss institution's side. Any further follow-up communication shall be made directly between the Applicant and the potential partner found.

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<sup>7</sup> Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on Public Procurement



## 11. SELECTION PROCEDURES

The Administrative Compliance Check and the Eligibility Check of the Application and of the Applicant is ensured by the technical means of the EGRANT system.

The expert evaluation of each Programme Component Application shall be carried out by three external evaluators.

The evaluators are nominated by the line ministry - the Ministry of Environment of the SR, the Programme Operator - the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the SR and the Swiss Contribution Office. In case that any of the entities decides not to exercise its right, the Programme Operator shall nominate the evaluator.

Each entity, except the Programme Operator, shall nominate 1 evaluator for every 15 Programme Components Applications. The Programme Operator shall always nominate two evaluators to eliminate potential Conflicts of Interest.

The evaluators shall evaluate the Programme Component Application in the EGRANT system. Each evaluator is randomly assigned in EGRANT to an Evaluation of the Programme Component Application. In case of a conflict of interest of an evaluator, the Programme Operator shall assign the Programme Component Application to another evaluator.

The evaluator shall evaluate the Programme Component Application based on the scoring criteria set out in the Call.

All nominated evaluators must meet the condition of independence from their nominating institutions and Steering Committee.

Further details are set out in the Evaluator's Guide (Annex 8 of the [Projects Implementation Manual](#)).

### **Programme Component decision**

Based on the results of the evaluators' evaluation, the ranking of the Programme Component Applications is determined on the basis of the average of the scores of all three evaluators.

The decision to approve, disapprove or include a Programme Component Application in the Programme Components pipeline shall be taken by the Steering Committee for the Programme.

Decision-making is governed by the Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee for the Programme.

### **Reserve List of Programme Components**

The Steering Committee is empowered to establish a reserve list of Programme Components.

In case that additional funds under the Programme become available, the Programme Operator is entitled to select from the Programme Components reserve list new Programme Components to be financed.

## 12. FINANCING AND REPORTING

Payments of the project grant shall take the form of **Advance Payment**. The Programme Operator shall ensure the payment of the Project Grant to the Programme Component Operator through Advance Payments **up to 100% of the Project Grant amount**, unless otherwise provided in the Programme



Component Contract. The amount of **each Advance Payment** shall **not exceed 20%** of the amount of the Project Grant awarded.

The first Advance Payment shall be paid following the signature of the Programme Component contract, unless a condition precedent is set out in Programme Component Contract. In such case the first Advance Payment shall be paid on the fulfilment of such condition. The first Advance Payment shall be made in accordance with the Indicative Reimbursement Plan, which follows a four-month frequency, in the amount as per the approved Application, and within **fifteen working days from the date of entitlement**, which is defined as the date when all conditions for payment specified in the Programme Component Contract are fulfilled.

The Programme Component Operator submits a **Programme Component Interim Report** at specified intervals, called Reporting Periods, to the Programme Operator in order to regularly inform about the quality and progress of the Programme Component implementation. In the EGRANT system, the Programme Component Interim Report is a part of the Payment Request. The frequency of submission of Payment Requests is normally once every 4 months. The Programme Component Operator shall submit the Payment Request within 15 working days of the end of the relevant Reporting Period.

The Programme Component Operator declares the completion of the Programme Component with the last payment request. The Programme Component Operator is obliged to submit the completed last Payment Request by 15 January 2029 at the latest.

Reports and Payment Requests shall be submitted in the Slovak language.

**Sustainability** is the period during which Programme Component Operators must maintain the purpose, objectives and outputs of the Programme Component. The sustainability of the Programme Component will be described in the Application and must be set for a **minimum of 5 years**. The minimum sustainability period of the Programme Component will be specified in the Programme Component Contract. The Programme Component sustainability report will be submitted as part of the Programme Components reports. During the sustainability period, the Programme Component Operators will be required to provide a report on the maintenance of the Programme Component's outputs annually, and compliance with conditions may be verified on-site.

### **13. STATE AID**

The Programme Operator shall, in line with Article 3.3.8 of the Regulation, ensure that any public support under the Swiss Contribution complies with the procedural and substantive State aid rules applicable at the time when the public support is granted.

The activities eligible under the Call, such as measures to protect biodiversity (e.g. habitats restoration, tree planting, wildlife corridors, invasive species control), educating local communities on biodiversity conservation, and testing new measures and technologies focus on protecting biodiversity and ecosystems in protected areas in Slovakia. The activities are non-economic in nature, they are supposed to be aimed at public interest (e.g. environmental protection), carried out by public or non-governmental organisations, and therefore, financing of them is generally not considered as providing *de minimis* or State aid.

However, before approving an Application the Programme Operator will carry out a State aid test and each application will be assessed individually to ensure compliance with the *de minimis* or State aid rules.





If the Programme Operator finds that the grant may constitute *de minimis* or State aid, it will verify whether the aid can be granted as *de minimis* aid within the meaning of an existing *de minimis* aid scheme.

## **14. APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

Applications shall be submitted electronically via EGRANT system accessible at <https://swiss.egrant.sk/> until the date and time of the call closure specified in Chapter 1 of this Call (Basic data and conditions). In the EGRANT system it is necessary to register for the Call.

The procedure for submitting the Application is set out in the [Projects Implementation Manual](#). Instructions for completing the Application Form are provided directly in the Application Form in the EGRANT system. The Application Form shall be submitted in Slovak language with a summary in English. The Executive Summary is necessary and important due to the involvement of persons from abroad at different stages of the evaluation.

The following mandatory attachments shall be submitted along with the Application:

1. Documents demonstrating the Applicant's activities in the field of environmental protection for at least the last year preceding the announcement of the Call,
2. Partnership statement, letter of intent or other similar documents proving the partner's interest in participating in the Programme Component, if the Programme Component is planned to be implemented in partnership,
3. Title deeds for all properties on which construction work will take place (to be assessed as part of the Programme Component), if relevant,
4. Documents proving Local Community consultations.

The **EGRANT system** will ensure the Administrative Compliance Check and the Eligibility Check of the Application and of the Applicant. The EGRANT system will allow to submit the Application only if Administrative Compliance and Eligibility Requirements are fulfilled.

Optional attachments may be submitted within the Application. Relevant supporting documentation demonstrating compliance with individual selection criteria, if relevant, is recommended as optional annexes.

## **15. FURTHER INFORMATION**

**There is no legal entitlement to the Project Grant.**

Before and during preparation of an Application the Applicant is strongly advised to comply with the following documents, as amended:

- [Projects Implementation Manual, including Annexes](#),
- EGRANT system instructions for completing the Application (Annex 1a).

Further recommended documents to be consulted are:

- [SUPPORT MEASURE AGREEMENT between the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic on the Support Measure „Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Strengthening Biodiversity in Protected Areas“](#)
- the Management System of the Second Swiss-Slovak Cooperation Programme

- Framework agreement on the implementation of the second Swiss contribution
- The Regulation on the implementation of the second Swiss contribution to selected Member States of the European Union
- Other documents published at the webpage [www.swiss-contribution.sk](http://www.swiss-contribution.sk).

These documents are published on the website [www.swiss-contribution.sk](http://www.swiss-contribution.sk). The Programme Operator will also introduce and regularly update a document with questions and answers regarding the call every Monday, if relevant.

The Programme Operator can be contacted for queries by:

- e-mail: [swiss-contribution@mirri.gov.sk](mailto:swiss-contribution@mirri.gov.sk) (the request needs to be linked to the call – by call code B1002; questions received by e-mail will be responded within 7 days);
- phone: +421-2-2092 8464.

## **16. CALL ANNEXES**

- Annex 1a): Application form – Preview  
Annex 1b): Instructions for completing the Application  
Annex 2: Selection Criteria  
Annex 3: Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee  
Annex 4: Search for Swiss partner Contact Form  
Annex 5: List of protected areas