

Second Swiss Contribution

Czech Republic

Support Measure Proposal

31.05.2024

Title	Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity
Executing Agency	Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic
Partner State Support Measure Code (if any)	n/a
Support Measure Type	Programme

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1. Basic information

Title	Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity		
Support Measure Type	Programme		
Objective	Protecting the environment and the climate		
<u>Primary Thematic Area</u>	Nature conservation and biodiversity		
<u>Secondary Thematic Area (if relevant)</u>	Choose an element.		
Planned Duration [months]	62		
Requested Swiss contribution (CHF)	38.4 million		
Requested co-financing rate of Switzerland [%]	85		
Name of the Executing Agency	Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic (MoE)		
Type of entity	National administration		
If type of entity is "other", describe the type briefly	-		
Correspondence address	Vršovická 1442/65, 100 10 Praha 10		
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Has the Executing Agency previously received funding from the Swiss Contribution?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

2. Strategic Support Measure description

2.1 Lead

The objective of the Programme is to contribute to reducing the long-term loss of biodiversity in the Czech Republic. The Programme aims to address two main causes of biodiversity decline, namely human interference with ecosystems (e.g. landscape fragmentation) and ecosystems over-exploitation (e.g. excessive tourism). Through the Programme, a reduction of the pressure on ecosystem functions and services in the landscape, especially in nature valuable sites, shall be achieved.

The Programme consists of two main pillars, Enhancing Biodiversity (focused on landscape and river network fragmentation to enhance connectivity of species populations, favourable status of ecosystems and their functions, as well as landscape permeability and stability) and Sustainable Tourism (focused on system changes to management of visitor flows on nature wealth and ecosystem services in selected localities).

2.2 Context and relevance

Current status

There is a long tradition of nature protection in the Czech Republic. Currently, it is regulated by the law no. 114/1992 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection which defines 6 categories of territorial protection. The „National Park“ (NP) and „Protected Landscape Area“ (PLA) categories include larger territorial units perceived as instruments for large-scale nature protection. „National Nature Reserves“ (NNRs), „National Nature Monuments“ (NNMs), „Nature Reserves“ (NRs) and „Nature Monuments“ (NMs) are part of small-scale nature protection. There are 26 Protected Landscape Areas and 4 National Parks in the Czech Republic at the moment, which in combination with 4 other categories of small-scale specially protected areas make up 17% of the total area of the country. Part of this area overlaps with NATURA 2000 sites in the Czech Republic which represent protected areas valuable for their species or habitats in terms of their European distribution. Within the Natura 2000 network, 1.112 Sites of European Importance and 41 Special Protection Areas have been designated in the Czech Republic. The total area of specially protected areas together with the Natura 2000 sites make up 22% of the area of the country. While National Parks protect the most valuable areas in the Czech Republic with preserved natural phenomena and processes, Protected Landscape Areas usually include preserved parts of the cultural landscape and aim to preserve a certain way of the landscape management. Both National Parks and Protected Landscape Areas are characterised by the abundance of rare or endangered species of plants and animals, the presence of rare and declining habitat types, and their primary purpose is to preserve the biodiversity of the Czech landscape.

At the moment, there are plans for three new protected landscape areas and one national park to be established. The proposed Křivoklátsko National Park, located in the central part of the current Křivoklátsko Protected Landscape Area, boasts a diverse composition of trees and natural stands, housing over 1800 species of vascular plants and a significant bird population. The process for declaring this national park has been initiated by the Ministry of the Environment, and is still in the early stages. The discussions for the designation of the PLA Soutok have also begun, with the Ministry of the Environment intending to establish it by the end of 2024. The area, located at the confluence of the Morava and Dyje rivers, has undergone extensive public consultation (the formal phase of the designation of the PLA involved nearly three hundred meetings organized by the Nature Conservation Agency in the region over the course of almost a year). Similarly, efforts are underway to establish the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) as a Protected Landscape Area due to its distinct landscape and historical significance. However,

the process is still in preliminary negotiations, with the region facing challenges related to tourism, development, and the restoration of nature after historical mining activities.

The National Parks are managed by their Administrations, the state organisations established and funded by the Ministry of the Environment (MoE) while the MoE is responsible for the execution of certain acts of state administration, the co-ordination of international relations and the management and guidance of their comprehensive care. The Protected Landscape Areas (with the exception of the Elbe Sandstone PLA and Šumava PLA – both managed by National Park Administrations) are managed by The Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (NCA) which is a governmental body. The main role of the Nature Conservation Agency is to provide care for these protected areas as well as professional support for the state administration in the field of nature and landscape protection, including data management, mapping, species monitoring, preparation of expert documents for the MoE, information and awareness-raising activities in nature conservation and landscape protection and other activities mandated by the Ministry of the Environment. Regional Authorities ensure the performance of state administration in the perimeter of their territorial jurisdiction outside large-scale protected areas. In the field of nature protection, they ensure the care of Nature Reserves and Nature Monuments, specially protected species in the open countryside, and perform tasks and activities entrusted to them by the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection.

In recent years, especially in connection with the intensification of domestic tourism and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been increasing pressure on the use of National Parks and Protected Landscape Areas for recreational and leisure activities of the population. Interference with and over-exploitation of ecosystems reduce species and habitat diversity, place stress on ecosystem functions and services, and limit their ability to provide additional functions and benefits. Significant interventions in ecosystems are represented in particular by the fragmentation of the landscape through the completion, expansion and intensive use of transport infrastructure, the construction and operation of energy and water structures, but also, for example, the development of a local network of trails and the presence of humans in places not previously used by them. This leads not only to repeated disturbance of animals and plants in their development, isolation and fragmentation of their populations, but also to damage and even extinction of their habitats. Fragmented populations lose their natural genetic diversity and their ability to communicate, reproduce and migrate is limited.

Landscape fragmentation is a complex problem that is receiving a lot of attention in the Czech Republic. The conceptual approach has been expressed in two fundamental documents - the Conception of Unblocking the River Network of the Czech Republic and the Designing of Migration Corridors for Large Mammals of the Czech Republic. The former identifies the most priority sections of the river network that need to be unblocked in order to gradually restore communication between populations of water-bound organisms. The second one, corridors for large mammals, covers the minimum necessary connections in the landscape even for smaller species and points out so-called critical points whose management would allow to connect large landscape units and thus populations of rare and endangered or just ordinary plant and animal species. Another related problem that has not yet been addressed in the Czech Republic is the fragmentation of airspace, especially caused as a result of existing power lines or development of wind power plants for instance. Moreover, at the regional level, there are migration barriers preventing the movement of specific groups of organisms for the purpose of reproduction and meeting other biological needs, e.g. amphibians between water bodies or reptiles between suitable habitats, or, watercourses inappropriately artificially modified in the past.

At the national level, the general trend of biodiversity decline is monitored within the Biodiversity Strategy (2015-2025), at the European level within the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030. In line with both strategic documents, it is necessary to make significantly greater efforts for more

effective use of existing instruments for biodiversity conservation, better planning and implementation of measures for sustainable use of biodiversity.

Tourism can serve as a means of education and recreation for the general public and is one of the fastest growing economic sectors today. On the other hand, if not controlled and managed in the long term, it may pose a major problem for the conservation of biodiversity. **Excessive tourism** causes a number of problems affecting the quality of the area and its habitability for plant and animal species, as well as affecting the quality of people's time spent there. These problems include litter and noise production, failure to follow designated routes and subsequent trampling of the area, violation of smoking or bicycle entry bans, illegal parking or creation of traffic queues and congestion. Moreover, for the increased number of tourists, some localities are not equipped with sufficient basic infrastructure - parking spaces and public toilets. In the case of missing accommodation capacities in some regions, the number of one-day visitors continues to increase, which cannot have a positive economic impact on the visited region.

Promoting public interest in the natural wealth of the Czech Republic is important, however, it is necessary to complement it by developing environmentally friendly public infrastructure (hiking trails, accommodation, catering and other services), environmentally friendly transport facilities (cycle buses and ski buses) and sports facilities where appropriate, so that the pressure from tourists can be dispersed to more locations and the destruction of the most valuable parts of Czech nature can be avoided. There is a constant need to point out the extraordinary nature of protected areas, their distinctive features as well as the rarity and degree of threat to their species and habitats. Firstly, so that a visitor knows what they can find and see in a given area, and secondly, so that they are increasingly aware of the consequences of their inappropriate influence.

Until 2022, the sustainable tourism agenda in the Czech Republic has been addressed by the CzechTourism organisation individually across its products. Since the end of 2022, CzechTourism has started to address sustainable tourism under the New Forms of Tourism product, which now also includes barrier-free and wedding tourism. Solving problems of excessive tourism and its direct impact to the nature is a relatively new topic that has not yet been systematically addressed.

Intended intervention

The basic prerequisite for ensuring favourable conditions for species and their natural habitats is the good condition of the landscape and the preservation or restoration of its functions, which are conditioned in particular by the careful use of the landscape and appropriate management. The resilience of natural habitats and species populations to external pressures is weakened by human activity, which contributes to changes in habitat conditions and fragmentation of ecosystems.

Enhancing biodiversity

The rapidly declining permeability of landscape and watercourses reduces the potential for further conservation of species, genetic and habitat diversity and in the past, it often led to the extinction of native species in the Czech Republic. The continuity of the open landscape is most seriously affected by the construction of linear infrastructure necessary for transport on roads and railways, but also by the use of the river network or airspace as a source of renewable energy and other uses. In order to ensure interactive free movement of people, goods and services within the EU internal market and in the context of the Czech Republic's position in the centre of Europe, the development of necessary infrastructure is necessary, but it should consider the latest findings from applied research in this field and respect the needs of nature, wildlife and natural ecosystems as much as possible.

Ecological stability of landscape (which is a set of functionally interconnected ecosystems and civilizational elements) is most critically weakened by sudden, frequent and especially spatially far-reaching changes to the landscape that disrupt its natural self-renewal capacities. Autoregulatory mechanisms in ecosystems exposed to long-term and intensive pressure fail and the ecosystems degrade. Degraded ecosystems lose their ability to provide ecosystem functions and services or withstand not only other anthropogenic pressures but also natural stresses. This causes, in many cases, disruption to longstanding and natural interlinks and relationships within populations of individual species of organisms, between individual species and between organisms and their natural external environment. The landscape loses the ability to resist climate change impacts and adapt to change.

The intensity of human activity in the landscape, especially related to construction and intensification of the operation and use of existing buildings, creates permanent or temporary barriers in the landscape. This in turn causes significant separation of populations of different species by impenetrable or impassable migration barriers, thereby reducing food availability and reproductive opportunities. This results in a loss of genetic diversity of plant and animal species and a reduction in the viability of populations and ecosystems, but also some permanent changes to the character of the landscape.

The Czech Republic is one of the European countries with a very high level of fragmentation of terrestrial ecosystems and river networks. Within the project "Development of a Strategy to Reduce the Impacts of River Network Fragmentation", 9.605 migration barriers with the height exceeding 0.2 m were identified on 14.606 km long river (15% of the Czech river network). The output of the project is the Conception of Unblocking the River Network of the Czech Republic which defines priority watercourses or their sections for migratory clearance. They are divided into two categories. The trans-regional corridors with a link to the marine environment, especially for diadromous migrants such as Atlantic salmon, and the national corridors defined in terms of species and territorial protection (e.g. SCIs with the river pearl mussel, which is existentially dependent on the migration of brown trout). The administrations of the individual river basins use this Conception for the water management planning processes where they undertake, by means of individual river basin management plans, to meet these objectives in accordance with their prioritisation and to fulfil the provisions of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). Most of the fish crossings, especially on important watercourses, are in the design phase. This is the case, for example, with the Masaryk Lock in Střekov - its clearance by an acceptable fish pass is essential for the migration of salmon and other diadromous fish and lamprey species further into our territory and must also be addressed in terms of migration downstream to Germany.

Similarly, within the project "Comprehensive Approach to the Protection of Terrestrial Ecosystem Fauna from Landscape Fragmentation in the Czech Republic", an overall conception for the protection of terrestrial ecosystem fauna in the Czech Republic from landscape fragmentation was prepared, including an elaboration of a comprehensive methodological approach to the protection of landscape connectivity for the main relevant groups of terrestrial fauna (mammals, reptiles, birds and amphibians in forest and non-forest habitats). The main outputs are tools of practical use in spatial planning, mainly as spatial-analytical documents - the Map of migration corridors for large mammals in the Czech Republic, a publicly accessible database of amphibian collision sites or the Atlas of fragmentation and connectivity of terrestrial ecosystems in the Czech Republic. Currently, the project "Accessibility of Transport Infrastructure for Fauna as a Precondition for Safe and Sustainable Transport" is investigating the effectiveness of all 30 ecoducts in the Czech Republic, including those under construction or selected types of artificial deterrents in use.

On the other hand, the issue of protecting birds from striking electric wires or electric development is not yet sufficiently covered, and similarly, the impact of wind power plants on populations of common bird species is not sufficiently known. In this regard, there is a lack of detailed

description of the problem based on sufficient scientific data, etc., verification of the effectiveness of preventive measures, comprehensive provision of the most significantly damaged regions in the country, etc.

In spite of the significant conceptual and methodological materials on the problem and relatively high professional know-how in the Czech Republic, a significant limitation is the high costs of solving individual critical or problem areas and also the often different, often conflicting, economic and environmental interests.

Sustainable use of the landscape as a whole is important for protection of nature. Nevertheless, the most valuable areas, representing the most valuable parts of the natural and landscape heritage, must be protected under a special regime using institutionalized protected areas. However, in order to ensure functionality of the entire system of protected areas, it is also necessary to ensure their linkage to other parts of the landscape with a higher degree of ecological stability which is connected to landscape fragmentation.

Sustainable Tourism

In recent years, we have seen an increasing number of visitors to popular but also nature valuable sites. This trend is associated with over-tourism in some locations.

There is a number of problems related to the excessive tourism that need to be addressed, especially in the case of natural sites that are not infrastructurally prepared to receive large numbers of visitors and their absorption capacity is small. A large number of tourists, concentrated in a limited number of locations over a short period of time (especially in the summer months and during public holidays), leads to the disproportionate pressures on the environment. In connection with this, the overall importance and attractiveness of the area is also reduced. Destination management in the Czech Republic struggles with understaffing, insufficient budget for sustainability activities and a lack of methodology on the subject. Representatives of destination agencies perceive sustainable development as an important topic, but unfortunately, they do not have the capacity to address this topic in depth, although immediate action is needed. The CzechTourism Agency has started to address this problem in 2023 and will continue with the development of the methodology in the year 2024. It is desirable to develop sustainable forms of tourism with the participation of local businesses, municipalities and certified destination management organizations and to consistently monitor and evaluate impacts of tourism on the environment and quality of life of local people.

In the Czech Republic, unlike in many countries with advanced tourism management, there is a lack of systematic and long-term monitoring of the impacts of visitors on various landscape and natural elements. Data collection is conducted by destination management organizations themselves, but due to the lack of a uniform methodology, it is not possible to compare data across the whole country. This problem should be addressed in the future by including the monitoring of sustainable indicators in the National Categorization and Certification System for destination management organizations. Another weak point is the linkage between monitoring data and its use in area management. Regulation of visitor movement and behavior in SPAs and their education is necessary, which could be achieved through thoughtful planning of tourism infrastructure and the transport and movement of persons within protected areas. National parks, in particular, suffer from these problems.

Through the Programme and its components, we aim to redistribute tourists from heavily visited protected areas to interesting or new locations beyond the borders of these protected areas. These new locations must ensure the necessary infrastructure and foster dialogue between all stakeholders. To achieve this goal, promoting cooperation and coordination among relevant entities in the field of sustainable tourism is needed. Cooperation in the conservation and protection of natural sites, which serve as a source of tourism, is particularly important

between the Ministry for Regional Development (including the Czech Tourism Agency) and the Ministry of the Environment.

To develop a plausible and complex strategy for effective tourist redistribution, it is necessary to obtain data on congested locations and potential alternative visitor targets. Monitoring the impact of tourism on the environment and the quality of life of local residents requires a corresponding methodology for data collection and analysis. The availability of relevant data related to tourist flows and behavior will facilitate the creation of comprehensive and long-term strategies for sustainable tourism and the determination of the carrying capacity of sensitive locations. Data on the availability of alternative tourist attractions and their promotion (e.g., familiarizing tourists with lesser-known attractions and increasing awareness of off-season activities) will help distribute visitors more evenly in space and time. Tools for managing tourist flows, as well as reducing or increasing tourist demand during critical periods, need to be developed. Additionally, setting appropriate promotional strategies for sensitive sites is important.

Data collection and complex overarching strategies need to be translated into evidence-based policymaking and policy implementation at the local or regional level. Therefore, relevant authorities should be motivated to develop visitor management and infrastructure to direct visitor traffic and prevent movement in undesirable areas or reduce erosion activities respecting the needs of tourists and visitors, the condition and limits of the site, and the needs of the local population (e.g. a construction of so-called Houses of Nature, visitor centres of the SPAs or interpretation centres of national geoparks).

To achieve sustainable tourism in specific areas, public awareness of environmentally friendly and sustainable forms of tourism that respect the needs of local residents and the environment must be raised. These forms include rural tourism, agritourism, ecotourism, hiking, cycling, as well as cultural and medical tourism. Therefore, the implementation of educational, awareness-raising, and informational activities is essential. Additionally, supplementary measures addressing accessibility, digitization, and innovative solutions, along with the use and expansion of eco-labels and existing quality labels, are also needed.

The issue of sustainable tourism in nature valuable areas extends beyond existing protected regions. It is equally important to address this issue in newly designated protected areas, which are expected to become popular tourist destinations and face similar problems and challenges. Based on the experiences of existing protected areas, developing a comprehensive approach to visitor management and tourism regulation is important to prevent the consequences of excessive tourist loads.

Setting basic limits and defining key themes for interpreting the natural and cultural heritage of an area contribute to a systematic solution for long-term tourism management. Currently, visitor management concepts are being developed for Protected Landscape Areas (PLAs). These concepts are consulted with tourism partners in the territory and subsequently applied in management plans for the PLAs and regional tourism development strategies. Developing such a concept in the early stages of a newly designated protected area can help create a solid framework for sustainable tourism. It is equally important to establish basic conditions for managing tourism right from the inception of a new protected area. For newly designated protected areas, developing appropriate visitor infrastructure is necessary in order to prevent from negative effects of overtourism later. Analyses, past experiences, and statistical models show that newly declared protected areas usually experience an increase in visitor numbers by several tens of percent.

Relevance with strategic documents

The Support Measure is based on the strategic documents adopted at the national level in accordance with legislative acts of the European Union and follows conventions adopted on a global scale. The Swiss- Czech Cooperation Programme could help fulfil biodiversity strategies adopted by the Czech Republic. All strategies for nature conservation also contain sections on sustainable tourism and human intervention on ecosystems. They also contain educational and awareness-raising topics.

Enhancing biodiversity

- **National Biodiversity Strategy of the Czech Republic 2016 – 2025** is a fundamental conceptual document defining the priorities in the field of conservation, and the sustainable use of biodiversity. It reflects the Czech commitments to international treaties, namely EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 under Convention on Biological Diversity.
 - *Priority 2 Sustainable biodiversity and protection of natural processes (E.g. Measure 2.5.3 Improve landscape permeability for biota).*
 - *Priority 3 Sustainable use of natural resources (Measure 3.3.4 Restore landscape features, ensure the permeability of watercourses).*
- **The State Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection Programme of the Czech Republic 2020 – 2025** is an action plan for the National Biodiversity Strategy of the Czech Republic 2016 – 2025.

Objectives:

 - *1.1.4 Reduction of negative impact of landscape fragmentation and other significant anthropogenic sources of wildlife mortality.*
 - *2.4.1 Effectively protect and improve the eco-stabilising functions of watercourses and floodplains*
 - *3.1.1 Ensure sufficient representative data on nature and landscape of the Czech Republic for the needs of public administration decision-making*
- **The State Environmental Policy 2030, with outlook to 2050**
 - *3.2 Biodiversity conservation and conservation of natural and landscape values.*
- **Priority Action Framework for Natura 2000 in the Czech Republic in 2021–2027**
 - *E.2 Measures for the conservation and restoration of sites within and outside the Natura 2000 network*

Examples of priority measures

- **Unblocking migratory passage of watercourses (removal of migration barriers or creation of fish passes);** target species (*Aspius aspius*, *Zingel streber*, *Zingel zingel*, *Gobio albipinnatus*, *Gobio kesslerii*, *Gymnocephalus baloni*, *Gymnocephalus schraetser*, *Salmo salar*, *Lampetra planeri*, *Eudontomyzon mariae*, *Pelecus cultratus*, *Margaritifera margaritifera*, *Unio crassus*, *Cottus gobio*)
- **Revitalisation of streams including modifications of downstream biotopes;** target species and habitats (3240, 3260, 3270, *Austropotamobius torrentium*, *Unio crassus*, *Lampetra planeri*, *Cobitis taenia*, *Cottus gobio*, *Gobio albipinnatus*, *Gobio kesslerii*, *Misgurnus fossilis*, *Rhodeus sericeus amarus*, *Eudontomyzon mariae*, *Sabanejewia aurata*, *Alcedo atthis*)
- **Specific measures for amphibians** (*Bombina orientalis*, *Bombina orientalis*, *Triturus cristatus*, *Triturus cristatus*, *Triturus cristatus*, *Triturus cristatus*): securing migration across roads by permanent barriers or their repair.
- **Specific measures for the Tree Viper:** *Zamenis longissimus* - modification of risk sections on traffic roads and repair of already created barriers, signs
- ***Lutra lutra*** - modification of inadequately constructed bridges and culverts to improve passage.
- **Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic to 2030**
 - *Priority 3 Resilient ecosystems*

Objective 3.2 Biodiversity: The Czech landscape is diverse and biodiversity is being restored. - The diversity and stability of biotopes and populations of individual native

species of plants and animals is increasing. Natural restoration of ecosystems significantly altered by humans is a commonly used practice.

- **ACT No. 114/1992 Coll. on the Conservation of Nature and Landscape** – the primary legal document defining the needs and objectives in the field of nature protection and biodiversity conservation.
- At the **regional level**, the conceptual frameworks for specific areas are e.g. National river basin management plans, Specially Protected Areas management plans, Principles of National Parks care, sets of recommended measures for Sites of Community Importance and others, in which specific threats or pressures with negative impacts on biodiversity and necessary solutions addressing them are identified.

Sustainable Tourism

- **National Biodiversity Strategy of the Czech Republic 2016 – 2025** is a fundamental conceptual document defining the priorities in the field of conservation, and the sustainable use of biodiversity. It reflects the Czech commitments to international treaties, namely 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under Convention on Biological Diversity.
 - *Priority 1 Society that recognises the value of natural resources (E.g. Measure 1.4.5 Create and maintain quality visitor infrastructure in the SPAs).*
- **The State Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection Programme of the Czech Republic 2020 – 2025** is an action plan for the National Biodiversity Strategy of the Czech Republic 2016 – 2025.

Objectives:

- *3.3.1 Strengthen positive public attitude to nature and landscape and improve public understanding of the need for nature protection and landscape protection*
- *3.3.2 Increase opportunities and improve conditions for people to connect with nature and landscape*
- **The State Environmental Policy 2030, with outlook to 2050**
 - *4 Cross-cutting tools - Voluntary tools*

Voluntary tools positively motivate desirable behaviour. For example, voluntary commitments by companies, individuals and non-profit organisations to a higher form of environmentally responsible behaviour. The Czech Republic will also consider closer voluntary cooperation with industries and associations to achieve an environmentally friendly state without direct or stricter regulation. A very special category is 'nudging', which uses behavioural science and seeks to change traditional behaviour through sophisticated non-financial incentives (and without limiting the choices available).

- Green Key - certification of ecological services in tourism

- Environmental management systems - EMAS, ISO 14001, etc.

- Other activities - indirect non-financial motivation to promote more environmentally responsible behaviour (e.g. modification of marketing - change of the system of presenting products and services to introduce environmentally friendly products in a visible place in the shop, etc.), open platforms for sharing good practice.

- **Priority Action Framework for Natura 2000 in the Czech Republic in 2021–2027**
 - *E.1.5 Communication and awareness-raising measures in relation to Natura 2000, education and visitor attitudes - Promote the attendance of sites (so-called green tourism) outside sensitive sites and develop the necessary visitor infrastructure and ensure the promotion of Natura 2000 in information centres.*
- **Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic to 2030**
 - *Priority 4 Municipalities and region – Objective 4.4. Competence of public administration: the territorial public administration makes targeted use of tools for sustainable development of municipalities; the central state administration methodically supports and develops tools for sustainable development of municipalities*

- **Tourism Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021-2030** is a basic strategic document for the development of tourism in the Czech Republic. This document is created and implemented in cooperation with relevant ministries, including the Ministry of the Environment.
 - *2.4 Prevention and mitigation of the impacts of the Czech Republic on the environment, nature and local residents.*
 - *3.1 Support of an integrated marketing communication system for domestic tourism*
 - *3.2 Support of an integrated marketing communication system for inbound tourism*
 - *Action plan for the Tourism Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021-2030 for the years 2024-2025*
- **ACT No. 114/1992 Coll. on the Conservation of Nature and Landscape** – the primary legal document defining the needs and objectives in the field of nature protection and biodiversity conservation.
- At the **regional level**, the conceptual frameworks for specific areas are e.g. Specially Protected Areas management plans, Principles of National Parks care, sets of recommended measures for Sites of Community Importance and others, in which specific negative impacts related to excessive tourism and necessary solutions in this relation are identified.

Complementarity/synergies with funding Programmes of the donors

The focus of the Programme and the thematic priorities was based on a detailed analysis of complementary measures financed from other European subsidy titles and only those measures that are not supported by other financial instruments were selected. However, in many cases there are synergies and complementarities between different Programmes. Unlike other Programmes, the Programme “Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity” will support complex projects. While these may have the same objective as projects eligible for funding under other Programmes, they will differ in terms of eligibility of expenditure and focus. We also have information that currently the Operational Programme Environment 2021-2027 resources for financing similar projects will soon be exhausted.

- **State budget** - biodiversity protection is financed from the state budget. However, the Swiss contribution will be used for a broader range of protection beyond the existing solutions and will help to speed up the implementation and increase the effectiveness of the existing measures – it will therefore not replace funding from the state budget.
- **Operational Programme Environment 2021-2027**: this Programme supports activities aimed at fragmentation of landscape as well as water environment. The Programme allocation is relatively low and will soon be exhausted. In this context, it is necessary to discuss/harmonise the conditions of both Programmes in terms of project acceptability so that projects meet certain quality requirements. This is both, to promote projects of comparable quality and to avoid applicants favouring one Programme over the other due to different requirements for project preparation (this reason does not apply in the case of a few selected, large projects proposed to be funded under this Programme, but applies to a larger number of small projects under the Small Grant Scheme)
- **Operational Programme Environment** - Priority Area 4: Protection and care of nature and landscape Specific Objective: 4.1 - Ensure the favourable state of the subject of protection of nationally important protected areas. Eligible measures under this Programme include the creation of visitor infrastructure in all categories of specially protected areas and Natura 2000 sites with a link to the object of protection or interpretation of the protected area, as well as measures to guide visitors to eliminate negative

impacts on the object of protection caused by visitors and/or the construction or restoration of elements for interpretation of protected areas (visitor centres in protected areas, NP, NPP and NPR). The eligibility of applicants is limited exclusively to the public sphere, the implementation of the measures serves primarily to ensure or improve the condition of the objects of conservation, including the creation or improvement of visitor infrastructure.

- **Cohesion Fund:** the Environment Programme 2021 - 2027; Policy Objective 2, Priority 1, Specific objective 1.6, Measure 1.6.1: Activity 1.6.1.5 Visitor infrastructure to guide visitors in protected areas and raise awareness of pro-environmental issues. Eligible applicants are limited to the departmental nature protection organisations of the Ministry of the Environment (the Agency for Nature and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic, National Park Administrations, the Cave Administration of the Czech Republic), the target areas are NP, PNA, NPR, NPP, PP, PR and Natura 2000 sites, including the protection zone. The call is non-competitive.
- **Integrated Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027:** Specific objective 4.4: Strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation. The Programme supports measures addressing, at the same time, the uneven distribution of visitor arrivals due to, inter alia, underdeveloped public tourism infrastructure in the regions of the Czech Republic. The expected benefits of this objective include a more optimal distribution of visitors in the regions of the Czech Republic and a change in the approach to the protection and presentation of cultural heritage.

Relevance of the Support Measure with regard to social inclusion and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures

The Programme design primarily focuses on objectives other than fostering social inclusion and climate change adaptation and mitigation. However, in specific cases, these cross-cutting themes could be promoted. Concerning climate change adaptation, the call for proposals should encourage grant applicants to incorporate environmental considerations into activities related to constructing new or reconstructing existing objects such as visitor centres. These buildings should adhere to passive or low-energy standards, utilizing natural and locally sourced materials, and implementing separated grey and drinking water circuits.

In terms of social inclusion, relevant "hard-measure" activities should involve constructing barrier-free facilities. Furthermore, their operation, supplemented by educational, awareness-raising, and other public events, should prioritize accessibility for minorities, socially disadvantaged individuals, and low-income families.

Several other project activities may yield positive economic impacts on less developed areas by enhancing environmental quality and public appeal. Additionally, certain facilities such as Houses of Nature can foster solidarity and a sense of community at the local level, serving as meeting places for local civil society organizations, associations, schools, and residents.

Continuity with the first Swiss Contribution: N/A

Key stakeholders and collaboration

The key stakeholders within both pillars include especially the Administrations of specially protected areas, i.e. the Administrations of individual National Parks and the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic. These stakeholders are relevant in projects dealing with landscape defragmentation and excessive tourism on their territory and have long been dealing with the loss of biodiversity in protected areas caused by inappropriate human intervention in

nature and landscape fragmentation and the negative impacts associated with increasing and often unbearable visitor traffic. Support from these key stakeholders is therefore very welcome.

- **Administrations of National Parks** - the mission of National Park Administrations is to ensure the preservation and improvement of the natural environment in the entrusted territory, in particular the protection or restoration of the self-managing functions of natural systems, strict protection of flora and fauna, the preservation of the typical appearance of the region, the fulfilment of scientific and educational objectives and the use of the national park territory for eco-logically viable tourism and recreation that does not degrade the environment.
- **Administrations of Protected Landscape Areas** - the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic is a state institution that provides professional and practical care for nature and landscape of the Czech Republic. It takes care of Protected Landscape Areas, National Nature Reserves and National Natural Monuments through 14 regional offices. The subject of its activity is mainly the performance of state administration in the area of its territorial competence, expert support for the performance of state administration in the field of nature and landscape protection, information and awareness-raising activities, ensuring care for protected areas and other activities mandated by the Ministry of the Environment.

Other key stakeholders in the assessment of defragmentation measures on individual rivers are river basin authorities.

- **Povodí (River basins)** - state enterprises whose activities include the management of significant watercourses, activities related to the detection and assessment of the condition of surface and groundwater in the area of a given basin and other activities carried out by basin managers pursuant to Act No. 254/2001 Coll., on Water and on Amendments to Certain Acts (Water Act), Act No. 305/2000 Coll., on River Basins and related legislation, including the management of small watercourses in a given basin area for which the enterprise has been designated as manager.

The Railway Administration, Road and Motorway Directorate and ČEPS, a.s. are also competent in assessing defragmentation projects.

- **Railway Administration** - a state organisation whose basic mission is to perform the function of owner and operator of national railways and regional railways owned by the state.
- **Road and Motorway Directorate** – a state enterprise whose founder is the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic. The basic subject of its activity is the exercise of state property rights to real estate forming motorways and class I roads, ensuring the administration, maintenance and repair of motorways and class I roads and ensuring the construction and modernization of motorways and class I roads.
- **ČEPS** - a joint stock company, is the sole Czech Transmission System Operator and holds an exclusive licence to that effect granted by the Energy Regulatory Office under the Energy Act. The Company is responsible for the maintenance and upgrading of 44 substations comprising 79 transformers, which allow electricity to be supplied from the transmission system to the distribution network.

We also foresee cooperation with the CzechTourism Agency, especially in developing analyses of visitor numbers in protected areas, setting up appropriate procedures and monitoring progress in the field of sustainable tourism and in managing visitor numbers in nature valuable sites.

- **CzechTourism** is a state-funded organisation established by the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic. The main objective of CzechTourism is to promote the Czech Republic as a tourism destination abroad and in the Czech Republic. CzechTourism plays an important role in setting up the tourism management system, both as

the national tourism headquarters, coordinator of marketing and promotion of the Czech Republic abroad in cooperation with other ministries and departmental organisations, and partner for communication with regions in the field of tourism. In addition, the Czech-Tourism is an important partner of entrepreneurs.

The focus of the Programme assumes other stakeholders competent in defragmentation or sustainable tourism projects:

- **Forestry of the Czech Republic** - a state enterprise, whose main activity is the management of state-owned forest assets and the care of designated watercourses and estuaries. The basis of the company's forestry strategy is sustainable forest management based on maximum use of the creative forces of nature, which ensures continuous and balanced fulfilment of the production functions of the forests entrusted to it.
- **Municipalities, Regions, contributory organisations** - the implemented measures will influence the planning and decision-making of municipalities and local organisations involved in nature conservation or tourism in a given locality. Involvement of these entities is essential for the implementation of system measures. In many cases, complex measures cannot be implemented without the involvement or approval of municipalities and regions.
- **Destination agencies, tourism organisations** - the involvement of these organisations is indispensable with regard to monitoring and managing visitor numbers or creating new tourist sites. Their involvement is also beneficial for making system solutions.
- **Civil society organisations** - they are directly involved in the management of small-scale especially protected areas – nature monuments, nature reserves, or even national nature reserves. We must not forget the importance of NGOs in species conservation and their specific work in nature. NGOs involvement in sustainable development, environment protection and nature conservation related communication, providing education and public awareness is also crucial. NGOs often act as operators of nature houses or environmental education centres - they can also inform about problems related excessive tourism or help redistribute visitors.
- **Professional public, universities, scientific and research organisations** - their role is mainly important in the monitoring phase and also in recommending specific measures. They can link and complement investment measures with their knowledge.
- **Geoparks** - measures can be implemented on the territory of geoparks
- **Local businesses** - their activities may be affected, both positively and negatively, as a result of the measures implemented.

The Programme settings should replicate the needs of key stakeholders to reduce pressure on ecosystem functions and services in the landscape.

Prerequisites

As the measures are expected to be implemented mainly in areas of existing or soon to be declared specially protected areas, the key actors stated above have the necessary information, authority and capacity to implement them.

2.3 Results

IMPACT

The overarching objective of the proposed Programme is to achieve a reduction in the pressure exerted on ecosystem functions and services within, especially, the national parks and protected landscape areas in the Czech Republic, focusing on sites of high nature value. The

envisioned impact is to contribute to enhancing biodiversity by improvement of the landscape permeability and reduction of the adverse effects of overtourism.

Theory of Change (ToC) is applied in order to demonstrate a strategic pathway from long-term desired impact of the Programme through medium-term effects materialized in outcomes to outputs addressing the challenges of biodiversity protection and sustainable tourism especially in the Czech Republic's national parks and protected landscape areas. It underscores not only the immediate benefits to the environment but also the long-term sustainability of the proposed interventions, aligning with international best practices and promoting a harmonious coexistence between tourism and nature conservation.

Sustainable tourism:

Impact Hypothesis: We anticipate that by implementing targeted interventions aimed at addressing the problems associated with excessive tourism (described in Chapter 2.2) in nature valuable sites in the Czech Republic, the Programme will trigger a chain of short-, medium- and long-term effects that will ultimately lead to positive and lasting changes in tourism and environmental protection within these areas.

Outputs:

1. Implementation of tourism distribution measures:

- *Way of intervention:* Creation and implementation of measures leading to an appropriate distribution of visitors considering the needs of tourists, local conditions and the needs of the local population.
- *Intended results:* Ensuring a more balanced distribution of tourists, reducing the burden on specific sites of natural value and promoting a sustainable tourism pattern. Improved management and infrastructure for visitors, together with increased awareness, contribute to a more enjoyable and responsible tourist experience for visitors, thereby increasing their appreciation for nature and efforts to protect it.

2. Introduction of systemic solutions for sustainable tourism:

- *Way of intervention:* Development and implementation of system solutions for sustainable tourism, partnerships and cooperation between stakeholders.
- *Intended results:* Setting up a sustainable tourism management system with respect to the naturally valuable ecosystems and in cooperation with key stakeholders of the area will eliminate the impacts of inappropriate visitor behaviour in the areas in the long term. In the case of newly designated protected areas, this intervention will act as a preventive measure and help avoid negative impacts caused by e.g. overtourism or inappropriate visitor behaviour.

3. Implementation of visitor monitoring measures:

- *Way of intervention:* Introduction of monitoring measures to track visitor movements
- *Intended results:* The measurement of visitor movement using the collected data will help to create a mechanism for regulating visitor movement and directing it away from naturally sensitive areas.

4. Raising awareness and expertise in nature conservation:

- *Way of intervention:* raising awareness of nature and nature conservation - training and awareness initiatives for professionals and the general public on nature conservation and sustainable tourism practices.
- *Intended results:* Increasing the expertise of professionals and public awareness will promote responsible tourism behaviour that is in line with the objectives of the Programme.

Outcomes & impact:

- **Protecting nature and biodiversity:** long-term changes in tourist behaviour and in the management practices of tourist destinations will help reduce environmental degradation and provide better protection of nature valuable sites.
- **Culture of sustainable tourism:** Over time, the cumulative effects of diversified tourism flows, improved infrastructure, stakeholder coordination and policy integration will contribute to the creation of a sustainable tourism culture in the Czech Republic.
- **Economic and social benefits:** Sustainable tourism practices will help boost the local economy, preserve cultural heritage and improve the quality of life of the residents of tourist destinations, leading to long-term socio-economic benefits.
- **Strengthening bilateral relations** between the Czech Republic and the Swiss Confederation.

Enhancing biodiversity:

Impact Hypothesis: We anticipate that by implementing targeted interventions aimed at addressing the problems caused by landscape fragmentation (described in Chapter 2.2) in the Czech Republic, the Programme will trigger a chain of short-, medium- and long-term effects that will ultimately lead to positive and lasting changes in favour of the conservation of the resilient, biodiverse landscape of the Czech Republic.

Outputs:

1. Research and planning:

- *Way of intervention:* Conducting applied research to identify critical parts of the landscape, ecosystems and species sensitive to the degree of landscape fragmentation and to find appropriate technical or other solutions or mitigation of the impact of fragmentation.
- *Intended results:* Designing a comprehensive solution for the defragmentation of a specific part of the landscape in relation to the specific needs of particular endangered ecosystems or species.

2. Implementation of the defragmentation measures:

- *Way of intervention:* Implementation of specific solutions to increase landscape permeability in aerial, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, including habitat restoration, creation of wildlife corridors, barrier removal and other targeted interventions.
- *Intended results:* Specific measures taken to increase the permeability of the landscape, resulting in improved landscape connectivity for target ecosystems, in the longer term leading to stabilisation or restoration of populations of target species in fragmented landscapes.

3. Monitoring and evaluation:

- *Way of intervention:* Establishment of monitoring Programmes to track the impact of landscape fragmentation on populations of selected species, but also the effectiveness of implemented defragmentation measures. Collecting data on the status and occurrence of species and ecosystems threatened by landscape fragmentation, assessing the interconnectivity of ecosystems and species populations, so that it is possible to evaluate the possibility of implementing corrective measures or to verify the effectiveness of solutions already implemented.
- *Intended results:* Systems for monitoring landscape fragmentation, monitoring the status and occurrence of species and ecosystems, and evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions are in place. Increased ability of experts

and professionals in nature protection to identify and solve problems related to landscape fragmentation.

4. **Capacity building:**

- *Way of intervention:* Provide training and professional development opportunities for conservation professionals to increase their expertise in landscape fragmentation and defragmentation strategies. Workshops, seminars and field demonstrations to share best practices and develop technical skills.
- *Intended results:* Strengthening partnerships and cooperation between stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation efforts.

5. **Awareness raising campaigns:**

- *Way of intervention:* Creating and implementing awareness campaigns to inform the general public about the importance of landscape permeability for biodiversity conservation. Use a variety of media channels, educational materials and community engagement activities to raise awareness and strengthen efforts to reduce landscape fragmentation and its effect on species and ecosystems.
- *Intended results:* Increased knowledge and skills of nature conservation practitioners, as well as increased public awareness and understanding of the importance of landscape permeability for biodiversity conservation.

Outcomes & impact:

- **Nature and biodiversity protection:** permanent improvement of landscape permeability leading to long-term protection of target species and their habitats. Restoring ecosystem functions and services that contribute to the overall resilience and health of the natural landscape.
- **Economic and social benefits:** Changing social attitudes and behaviour towards promoting landscape connectivity and biodiversity conservation.
- **Strengthening of bilateral relations** between the Czech Republic and the Swiss Confederation.

2.4 Intervention Strategy

The Programme Operator is the Ministry of the Environment. MoE is the central authority and is responsible primarily for the fields of legislation, conceptual planning and methodology. It ensures landscape protection, conservation of species diversity, natural values and aesthetic qualities of nature, as well as the protection and sustainable use of natural resources. The MoE is the responsible body for the preparation and implementation of the measures, monitoring and management of the „Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity" Programme. We aim to achieve the Programme's proposed objectives by supporting both **large** infrastructural and non-infrastructural projects with a minimum total value of CK 70 million, as well as **small**, mostly soft-measure projects from CZK 500.000 up to CZK 5 million by the means of so-called Small Grant Scheme. The infrastructure in large proposals refers to a complex of items of investment nature, typically large investment constructions, with the minimal total value of 2 mil. Swiss francs. For the Biodiversity pillar, we perceive infrastructure as an investment made in aquatic, terrestrial or air conditions. For the Sustainable tourism pillar, we perceive the term "infrastructure" as specific type of activities which purposefully concentrate tourism in one area, direct tourists from unsuitable areas to suitable areas, or help awareness raising, information and regulation of tourist movement.

To select the most suitable projects, at first, one **open call** for submitting **large project proposals** will be launched for **each** of the two pillars (Enhancing Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism). The call will have two rounds – one for submitting proposal concepts and the other for submitting full project proposals. It will be launched simultaneously for both pillars and will

have identical closure and evaluation dates. This setting makes it possible to reallocate unused funds from one pillar into another if there are not enough quality projects submitted under either of them. Only as a last resort would a repeated call be launched, in which case the unsuccessful call would have been evaluated and its conditions revised accordingly. In this way, the maximum possible use of the allocated funds will be ensured for high-quality and meaningful projects. If it were not possible to reallocate funds between the different pillars, another call would have to be launched. However, this could mean less time for projects implementation and higher risk of the funds not being used up.

In addition, there will be another open **call** for submitting **project proposals under the Small-Grant Scheme** (hereinafter as SGS), common to both pillars. The applicants will submit a complete project proposal (simpler in substance than in the case of large projects). Having SGS will enable the participation of specific beneficiaries and variability of projects. The call for the Small-Grant Scheme will be a single round. The total allocation will not be split in between the different pillars of the Programme. Selection of successful projects will be determined by quality criteria. The dates of the call and its timetable will differ from the call for large projects. We expect one call under the SGS only. In case there were significant financial savings coming from the approved projects (both large and SGS ones), an accelerated second call may be considered in the second half of the Programme implementation, though.

The large projects shall be focused on:

Pillar 1 – Sustainable Tourism: projects will focus on system changes in the management of visitor flows to selected natural sites considering the natural assets and ecosystem services in these sites.

A. 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.

1. 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.
2. 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.

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

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

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

1. Building or renovating visitor/information centres and houses of nature.

2. 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.
3. Support for educational programmes of 'locally anchored learning'.
4. 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, these will be projects aimed at sustainable visitor management in nature valuable sites, particularly with regard to the extreme pressure on ecosystems due to excessive tourism. These projects aim primarily at distributing 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 demonstration approaches and offering comprehensive solutions in co-operation 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.

Pillar 2 – Enhancing Biodiversity: projects will focus on landscape and river networks fragmentation to enhance the connectivity of species populations, the favourable state of ecosystems and their functions, as well as the permeability and stability of landscapes.

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

1. 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.).
2. 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.)

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

1. 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.

2. 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.

The following activities will be supported through projects within the **Small Grant Scheme**.

All activities supported under the SGS may also be part of large projects.

1. Creating programmes and offers for specific groups of visitors (seniors, parents with children, disabled).
2. Organising exhibitions, educational programmes and awareness-raising campaigns to develop sustainable tourism and reduce the environmental burden of the area.
3. Use of modern forms of interpretation of natural heritage and attractions in information centres, Houses of Nature, etc., or through mobile phone applications. Support for “locally anchored learning” educational programmes.
4. Organising local events aimed at presenting natural heritage, promoting local products or products of regional brands - in cooperation with municipalities and the private sector. The local events shall contribute to strengthening sustainable tourism and enhancing biodiversity in targeted areas.
5. Developing regional and local strategies and conceptual solutions to overtourism for selected landscapes based on long-term research on tourist arrivals and analysis of legal instruments to ensure implementation and compliance with the necessary measures, including research on sociological aspects of visitor behaviour.
6. Developing sustainable tourism strategies at local and regional level for large-scale specially protected areas (how to define the level of carrying capacity of tourism impacts - accommodation facilities - capacity, transport, sports facilities, tourist routes, seasonality, etc. for the areas, how to calculate this carrying capacity of the environment).

7. Mapping of functional tools for addressing negative impacts of tourism on the natural environment (spread over wider geographical areas), but without singling out the individual protected areas of interest, developing a methodology for addressing negative impacts on nature.
8. Mapping of tourist behaviour in relation to damage to nature in a specific protected area - proposals for specific practical solutions to reduce the negative impacts of tourism.
9. Preparation of visitor analyses for selected areas.
10. Building or restoring environmentally friendly infrastructure to channel and reduce the tourist load in nature-valued areas (information and education systems, nature-friendly paths, addition or modification of rest areas, waste management solutions).
11. Implementation of specific measures to support endangered Red List species for the Czech Republic, with an emphasis on limiting the fragmentation of their populations by improving the condition or restoring the habitats inhabited by or potentially suitable for them, including the provision of personnel and technical capacities for the implementation of these activities.
12. Tracking (monitoring) and evaluation of the impact of barriers in the landscape on the migratory permeability of air, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and on the mortality of wildlife species implemented on pilot or model parts of the territory, evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented measures to ensure the permeability of the landscape.
13. Comprehensive awareness-raising and educational campaigns targeting some of the factors threatening biodiversity in the Czech Republic (e.g. invasive species, landscape fragmentation, pollinator decline, illegal killing) - projects including a range of activities from the preparation of educational programmes, online educational materials for schools, to active elements such as excursions, competitions, mobile exhibitions focusing on specific target groups of the Czech population.
14. Projects increasing the expertise in the field of nature conservation of specific professions such as teachers, corporate ecologists, planners, landscape architects, road and railway managers, police, etc., who can actively influence some of the factors threatening biodiversity in the Czech Republic.
15. Awareness raising and educational activities in the field of nature conservation and nature management.
16. Projects aimed at transferring best-practice and exchange of experience through educational study exchange trips between Czech and Swiss actors, especially in the field of managing, professional and research institutions.
17. Support for projects working with farmers and farm owners to spread awareness and advice, including support for the creation of new landscape features or indigenous regional mixtures, and to motivate farmers to make positive changes in the management and care about landscape.

All the activities are the result of the round tables with stakeholders held in April and May 2023. It is also approved by the minister of the environment in this form. The list of SGS activities was also updated according to stakeholder consultations held in 21 February 2024.

2.5 Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries

The aim of the projects will be to provide new opportunities to inform the public about nature protection and the impact of excessive tourism on nature and the landscape. In this case, the typical direct beneficiaries will be **nature protection bodies (National Parks, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, Geoparks), regional administrations and municipalities, tourism organisations and destination agencies, tourists.**

The outputs of the individual projects will also provide a wealth of data, experience and methodological approaches that will be used by professionals involved in nature conservation and sustainable tourism. Pre- and post-project monitoring will in many cases be an ideal output for further research and scientific activities - **academic or scientific research bodies** will represent typical direct beneficiaries in this case.

Indirect beneficiaries

Typical indirect beneficiaries will be all citizens who can benefit from the implemented measures, **municipalities, local businesses and the public, including Swiss entities involved in projects** mostly to contribute to and also benefit from best-practice or knowledge exchange.

- Municipalities - municipalities and regions in the affected areas will have more information for decision-making, strategic and spatial planning - e.g. based on monitoring and management/routing of tourist movements they will be able to respond to the needs of tourists and local tourist infrastructure.
- Local businesses - on the basis of awareness-raising events and festivals the demand for local products can be increased, the number of customers of local businesses (restaurants, shops) in newly promoted tourist locations will increase.
- Public - efforts to direct the movement of visitors will reduce negative impacts in adjacent localities (less litter, illegal parking, noise...).
- Students - there will be an increase in their awareness of landscape fragmentation and sustainable tourism issues.

2.6 Programme Component Characteristics and regional focus

For pre-defined Programme Components fill out the following table.

Is the benefit of the pre-defined Programme Component national or regional?

National ☐ Regional ☐

If regional, indicate the benefiting NUTS-2 region(s):

2.7 Overview Swiss Support Measure Partners

Is/are a/several Swiss Support Measure Partner(s) foreseen to be involved in and contributing to the implementation of the Programme / Programme Components? Yes ☒ No ☐

No partners are foreseen at the Programme level at this stage. Nevertheless, **Swiss partnership will be actively encouraged at the project level.**

The Programme Operator will apply two main tools to foster Czech-Swiss project consortia: providing the list of potential suitable Swiss partners published at the Programme Operator's

websites (section dedicated to the Second Swiss contribution) to Czech applicants & awarding extra points during evaluation process of grant applications for suitable Swiss – Czech partnerships in projects. Already at the project preparation phase, the Programme Operator is ready, together with the help of SCO/SECO where needed, to provide Czech applicants with contacts to potential Swiss partner organisations, to initiate and catalyse networking activities serving as the bridge between the Swiss and Czech parties. Thanks to the study week in Switzerland, the Programme Operator has a contact base to all sorts of organisations which can both, be beneficial for and benefit from partnerships established in proposals under Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme with Czech beneficiaries. The contact base could be further expanded during the implementation of the Programme thanks to the cooperation with the donor institutions.

The presence of Swiss-Czech partnerships foreseen in projects will be bonified during the evaluation of project proposals by receiving extra points if well described and justified, depending on the quality and extent of cooperation suggested. The quality of the partnership and extent of the cooperation between the Czech and Swiss partners will be assessed, mainly in terms of joint preparation, implementation, number of joint results (covering specific activities or complete project), financing and partnership sustainability.

2.8 Sustainability

Financial viability: The anticipated components/projects will be projects focusing on the environment which cannot themselves generate future economic profits to finance the further stages of their implementation. The benefits resulting from the projects will be real improvements in the quality of the environment and positive public perception of how to proceed in promoting biodiversity and sustainable tourism.

Sustainability will be examined at the level of individual projects and will be part of the evaluation criteria. The decision to grant the subsidy will include a commitment to sustainability. Most large projects will be investment activities to address a specific problem within the landscape. In case of fish passes and ecoducts, both, the implementer and the operator of the facility will be known. Once their implementation has been completed, the facility operator will be obliged contractually and legally to maintain the operation of the facility.

The same principles will apply to project outputs submitted under both Programme pillars. In addition, there are national grants that can support the operation and management of Houses of nature, information and visitor centres. In case of technology, applicants will be asked to describe the expected investment depreciation in their project proposal.

Capacity building: We expect that the development of opportunities in capacity building will be given by the Small-Grant Scheme projects. We foresee the creation of regional and local strategies and concepts, for instance, that will be followed, which will have an impact on further development.

Legislative and policy changes: The implementation of the components/projects which will receive financial support from this Support Measure is primarily aimed at making a positive change in the quality of environmental protection. However, the implementation of projects and their focal objectives will require the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders. This will necessarily entail constructive communication about the form and the outputs of projects. The implementation of the Programme may therefore indirectly influence the dialogue between social actors and become an incentive to initiation of debates on the need for various legislative and policy changes.

Possibility for post-implementation monitoring: The Ministry of the Environment can use its own funds to ensure the evaluation of the impacts of the projects implemented. The impacts of the projects will be monitored even after the end of their implementation by the site administrators (national parks, river basin administrations, SŽDC, etc.). The MoE will play a coordinating role in this monitoring. Exceptionally, the MoE, within its competence, will check the viability of individual outputs.

Challenges and risk to the sustainability: During projects implementation, the staff capacities of individual applicants will be strengthened and we expect this trend to be partially sustained in the long run. It will be a challenge to ensure the sustainability of project outputs by initial staff capacities. We would like to see the implementation of start-up or pilot projects of exceptional value with the potential to further grow and sustain their outputs even after the project end using their own resources or funds from other sources.

2.9 Overview tentative budget

The total budget for the Programme implementation has been set in the following structure:

Budget No. 1 - Management costs – CHF 759.800

Budget No. 2 – Pre-defined Project – N/A

Budget No. 3 – Open Call 1 (Sustainable Tourism) – CHF 27.5 mil.

Budget No. 4 – Open Call 2 (Enhancing Biodiversity) – CHF 12.5 mil.

Budget No. 5 – Open Call 3 (Small Grant Scheme) – CHF 4.417 mil.

Budget in Total – CHF 45.180 mil.

Staff expenditures justification

So far, three persons from the Unit of International Programmes and Projects (Unit 323) from the Department of the Financial and Voluntary Instruments have been involved in preparation of the Support Measure Proposal in the following extent:

- Mr. Michal Petrus: part-time – financed from the state budget, supervising role
- Ms. Monika Vaněčková: full-time – financed from the state budget
- Ms. Markéta Konečná: full-time – financed from the SMPF since January 2024.

One full-time equivalent currently approved under the SMPF will subsequently be transferred to Programme implementation to ensure that all necessary activities related to the call announcement, evaluation, selection and monitoring of projects and reporting of Programme results can be ensured.

In addition, due to the anticipated large number of smaller projects, an additional full-time SGS administration position will need to be created. Apart from that, we suppose two more persons employed on short-term work agreements used for professional monitoring.

Role of the personnel involved:

- Works on the administration and implementation of the Support Measure – preparation of the open call documents as well as Programme implementation and monitoring rules, preparation of the evaluation process , monitoring and refunding of the projects, reporting of financial and implementation progress of the Programme to NCU.
- Communicates with the representatives of the NCU, the donor institutions and other relevant institutions active.
- Takes part in consultations with stakeholders and project promoters.
- Communicates and cooperates with relevant internal departments of the Ministry of the Environment.
- Provides trainings and information on the Open calls and SGS to applicants including the assistance concerning the search for and transfer of contacts to Swiss partnership organizations.
- Ensures the publicity of the Second Swiss Contribution in media and at websites of the Ministry.

The staff costs will also include remuneration for grant application evaluators, who will be contracted for the purpose of the grant application evaluation. The contracts will be short-term and will end with the completion of the task. Grant application evaluators will be remunerated according to the number of hours reported, depending on the number of grant application assigned for evaluation. The evaluation of grant application cannot be carried out in-house to the full extent, so experts with whom the Programme Operator has had experience in evaluating projects will be approached.

3. Support Measure readiness

3.1 General

Is the Support Measure proposal a continuation of a Project or Programme supported under the Swiss Contribution (I)? Yes ☐ No ☒

Was the Support Measure proposal declined during a funding-application process by other donors (e.g. EU, Norway/EEA)? Yes ☐ No ☒

If it was declined, explain why.

3.2 Preparation process and documents

Projects for support will be selected on the basis of **open calls** for proposals.

The process of assessment of grant applications (selection process) for large projects will be a two-round process, assessment of grant application of Small-Grant Scheme will be a single round process. In all cases, grant applications must be signed by the applicant's statutory representative or their authorised representative and submitted before the deadline for the last submission day for grant applications acceptance set in the call for proposal texts via a data box.

As far as large projects are concerned, in the first round, **concepts of project proposals** containing basic factual and technical characteristics, including a simplified budget proposal will be assessed. Submitted grant applications will be assessed according to **formal and eligibility requirements** first, followed by an **expert assessment**. The project proposals will receive a score based on the expert assessment, which will form the basis for the selection of projects for support by the **Evaluation Committee**. The Evaluation Committee will make a final decision on the list of successful and unsuccessful proposals.

Successful project proposals approved by the Evaluation Committee will be invited to be completed to the form of a **full proposal** (which will include all necessary prerequisites for successful project implementation, such as building permits and other documentation prescribed by law) and submitted for the second round of assessment which, procedurally, will be identical to the first-round assessment. At the end of the assessment process, the project proposals selected for support by the Evaluation Committee will be submitted to the **Steering Committee** of the Support Measure for final approval. Consequently, Grant Award Decisions will be issued to successful projects, allowing project implementation to begin.

In case of Small-Grant Scheme grant applications, the same assessment principles and procedures will apply as to those of large projects. First, the compliance of the grant application with **formal and eligibility requirements** will be assessed, followed by an **expert assessment** by approved expert evaluators against the technical qualitative criteria. The final selection of projects will be confirmed by the **Evaluation Committee**. On the basis of its final decision, the Grant Award Decision to successful projects will be issued.

Eligible applicants:

An eligible applicant is any legal entity based in the territory of the Czech Republic, with legal personality and an organization identification number.

The project proposals can be submitted by an individual entity or in a partnership consortium. The project partner can be a Czech or Swiss entity with legal personality in the Czech Republic or the Swiss Confederation.

Presumed applicants according to the types of proposed projects:

1. **Large projects:** government and public administration authorities, non-governmental non-profit organizations and a broad professional community. We suppose that a typical applicant will be represented by a public-law entity: nature protection bodies (National parks, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, geoparks), as well as regional administrations and municipalities. Under the “Enhancing Biodiversity” pillar, we suppose also state enterprises administrating individual river basins in the role of applicants. Tourism organisations and destination agencies on the other hand are supposed to be applicants under “Sustainable Tourism” pillar.
2. **Partners of main applicants of large projects:** The representatives of the academia (research institutions, universities), municipalities and NGO sector are supposed to be part of partnership structure in most cases. Their involvement will result in easier project implementation, communication with the public, monitoring the impact of implemented measures, access to information, etc.
3. **Small Grant Scheme applicants:** SGS should support the objectives of the Programme through smaller projects. These will be locally focused projects involving the public, scientific, academic, non-profit and private sectors.

Are legislative changes necessary to implement the Support Measure? Yes ☐ No ☒

If legislative changes are necessary, explain and note when the corresponding change is expected to have been made.

Are other (political) decisions necessary to implement the Support Measure? Yes ☐ No ☒

If other (political) decisions are necessary, explain and note when the corresponding decisions are expected to have been taken.

Is State Aid expected to be present in the Support Measure? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, please outline how the state aid will be handled.

Measures supported by the Programme and their associated eligible expenditures must comply with State aid rules and relevant EU Directives. The obligation to apply State aid rules where appropriate is mandated by law and will be subject to consultations with the Office for the Protection of Competition. The State aid rules for applicants are outlined and described in the call for proposals. The final form of the call document will be reviewed in consultation with the Office for the Protection of Competition. If there are comments of a specific or highly professional nature, we will engage external consulting services for assistance.

During the project selection process, particular attention will be given to State aid during the second stage of evaluation. Various factors that arise from specific aspects of project activities can influence the assessment of compliance with State aid rules. These details may not be adequately described by applicants in the concept note, so we have decided to focus on assessing State aid conditions at the stage of evaluating full project applications.

The assessment of State aid compliance will be conducted in cooperation with applicants. We also anticipate involving an external consultancy for complex or questionable cases. In instances of significant uncertainties, we will contact the Office for the Protection of Competition for further guidance.

State aid - basic conditions as specified in the call document

In case the project proposal contains several measures, some of which could be financed outside the State aid scheme, while others fall under the State aid scheme, the entire project will be financed under the relevant State aid scheme.

Projects carried out by public sector applicants, which are of a non-business nature (non-economic activity) conducted on their own land, do not constitute State aid.

State-owned enterprises must be treated as standard enterprises, and therefore, the rules on State aid must be applied in situations where the subsidy is directed towards their economic activity.

Non-profit organizations must be evaluated based on the activities they actually carry out; their legal form is not decisive.

Support under this call for proposals may be granted only in accordance with the rules governing State aid, in particular:

- block exemptions under Articles 45 and 53 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in accordance with Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (General Block Exemption Regulation - GBER), or
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 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 (de minimis aid).

Each applicant and their project are assessed individually in terms of State aid rules.

Feasibility study	None necessary / Not applicable
Baseline study, assessment or analysis	None necessary / Not applicable

Estimated number of tender dossiers to be prepared	# of dossier not yet prepared	
	# of dossier provisionally prepared	
	# of dossier completely prepared	

Permit(s)/Authorisations required and pending? Yes ☐ No ☐

If permit(s)/authorisation(s) required, specify (e.g. building, environmental, purchase of land etc.) and note when the corresponding permit(s)/authorisation(s) are expected.

4. Operational Support Measure description

a. Applying organisation (Executing Agency)

i. Financial and personnel information

(only to be completed for non-state institutions)

Date of establishment	Tax number (if applicable)
Number of employees	
Financial Turnover for each of the 3 previous years [in CZK], if applicable	

ii. Organisation structures of Executing Agency and Support Measure

General organisational set-up

The only Programme Operator (Executing Agency) responsible for Programme Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity is the Ministry of the Environment that was established as of 1 January 1990 by Act no. 173/1989 Coll., dated 19 December 1989, to function as the central state administrative authority and supreme inspection authority in environmental affairs. For the general organizational structure please see the organizational chart in the Annex C.

Specific organisational set-up for the Programme

- *Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments – Unit of International Programmes and Projects*

The Programme will be operated by Unit of International Programmes and Projects which is part of the Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments in the Section of Environmental Economics.

The Unit will be accountable for preparing and announcing calls for proposals, organising information seminars for applicants, promoting the Programme at the Ministerial websites and via other media channels. It will also serve as a contact point for receiving applications. The Unit will ensure formal and technical evaluation of the applications, prepare legal acts for signing grant agreements with beneficiaries and monitor the implementation of projects in line with binding Programme documents, regulations and guidelines. Together with the Department of Budget, it will secure the transfer of financial means to the accounts of the beneficiaries. It will report on the technical as well as financial implementation of the Programme towards the NCU and the donor in regular terms.

- *Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments and Department of Special Territorial Nature and Landscape Protection*

The technical departments provide expertise support and act as the expertise guarantors to both thematic areas of the Programme.

- *Department of Budget*

Department of Budget helps to set up and carry out all billing transactions within the Programme. Under the management control system, this department ensures double-checking of the processing of all financial transactions, as detailed in section 4.1.3 below.

- *Independent Unit of Internal Audit*

Overall supervision of the Programme implementation will be carried out by Independent Unit of Internal Audit.

iii. Support Measure management team

Will external management personnel be hired to implement the Support Measure?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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What personnel capacity will be dedicated for the management of the Support Measure implementation (in full-time equivalents FTE)?	Internal resources	External resources
	3	

Support Measure management team

Support Measure management team consists of persons with administrating as well as managing roles. There will be 3 full-time **Programme administrators** working at the Unit of International Programmes and Projects involved in the Programme implementation (out of which 1 person being paid by state, the other 2 being paid by the Programme management costs), in later stage of Programme implementation there will be 2 more persons employed on short-term work contracts to ensure project monitoring tasks related to SGS projects).

Main tasks of Programme administrators consist of:

- Ensuring smooth implementation of the Programme in line with all existing binding Programme documents;
- Creating and announcing and publicising open calls for grant applications, ensuring transparent and fair evaluation and selection of projects;
- Providing technical and administrative support to applicants and final beneficiaries (organising information seminars for applicants and kick-off meeting for successful beneficiaries), including assistance with contacting Swiss partners;
- Preparing legal acts in relation to awarding grants;
- Developing Implementation manual or supporting materials for beneficiaries;
- Supervising the implementation of individual projects, including approving project reports and ensuring timely transfer of funds to the final beneficiaries;
- Ensuring that the necessary funds are budgeted in the budget to provide the necessary pre-financing and co-financing of Programme expenditure;
- Communicating with representatives of the NCU, Paying Authority, Audit Authority, the donor institutions and other relevant institutions active in the implementation phase of the Programme;
- Communicating and cooperating with relevant internal departments of the Ministry of the Environment;
- Ensuring the publicity of the Second Swiss Contribution in media and at websites of the Ministry in line with the Regulation and based on a developed communication plan of the Programme;
- Developing a document containing a detailed management and control system of the Programme;
- Preparing and submitting relevant information and documents to the NCU that are by the Swiss managing authorities and the national managing authorities required (in particular annual Programme reports, Payment Requests, final Programme report, documents for working meetings, documents for audits);
- Providing the necessary information, access to documents and assistance to national managing authorities and their delegated authorities for controls and monitoring organised by the Czech side or monitoring organised by the Swiss side;
- Reporting any suspected irregularities or actual cases of irregularities to the NCU
- Preparing documents for establishing Programme Steering Committee.

At the Support Measure management level, *the Head of the Unit of International Programmes and Projects* conducts supervision of Programme activities, coordinates individual steps connected with the Programme implementation and manages the Programme administrators in charge of the specific tasks.

Steering and governance mechanisms are basically given by the hierarchical structure of the Ministry and the roles and responsibilities attributed to specific job positions:

- *Director of the Department of the Financial and Voluntary Instruments* manages the Unit of the International Programmes and Projects, and approves of technical decisions as well as financial transactions within the Programme. He takes the role of the Chairman of the Selection Committee during evaluation process of project proposals.
- *Chief Director of the Section of Environmental Economics* is in charge of the principal activities related to the Programme implementation – he nominates the evaluators, announces the calls for proposals and signs Grant Award Decision documents with beneficiaries on behalf of the Ministry of the Environment.

Adequate and effective control systems exist at all levels of the management and operation of the Ministry. They are incorporated in specific internal regulations which are binding for each worker of the organization.

At the management level, the control mechanisms are given by the management structure described above. At the financial level, the following individual levels of control within approval process apply:

- A competent person checks the factual correctness of fulfilment, i.e. whether grant, work, service or delivery were carried out in accordance with an issued order or a signed contract.
- After preliminary managing control, the principal of operation (Director of Department) confirms the payment approval– by an electronic signature and a time stamp.
- Accounts Unit carries out a formal check of the accounting document (price, bank account, registration).
- Budget administrator from the Budget Department carries out the control of budgetary item, reservation in the state treasury (IISSP) and confirms the payment.
- After a final check, the chief accountant approves of the payment to be carried out – by an electric signature and a time stamp.

Are CVs attached to this documentation?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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Are terms of reference for the management functions to be established attached to this documentation?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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iv. Programme and project management experience

The Unit of International Programmes and Projects has been coordinating and participating in the coordination of specific subsidy Programmes in the field of environmental protection for over 20 years. In the past, it has been the administrator of the EEA and Norway Grants, Phare and Transition Facility, INTERREG and the **Programme Operator for the First Swiss Contribution**, and three of the current members of the proposed management team (**Michal Petrus, Monika Vaněčková** and **Markéta Konečná**) have been involved in their preparation and implementation, thus building on previous experience and using their knowledge of the preparation and implementation of similar Programmes, as well as cooperation with the NCU and donor organizations.

For the past 5 years, the Department has annually launched a national call for LIFE projects, in which the best projects are selected and, if successful in the European LIFE call, will be supported from national sources.

The LIFE Programme is an EU Programme governed by Regulation (EC) No 1293/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing an Environment and Climate Action Programme and repealing Regulation (EC) No 614/2007. The overall implementation period of the Programme is 1 January 2014 - 31 December 2027. It is complementary and supplementary to other EU Programmes, aiming at improving the environment, preserving natural wealth, sustainable development including the use of renewable energy sources, reducing the impacts of climate change, etc. Projects financed under the Programme must primarily meet both the basic objectives of the Programme and specific objectives. Their outputs are measured and monitored using KPIs (key performance indicators).

The International Programmes and Projects Unit is the national contact point for the LIFE Programme. In addition to general support to applicants and implementers of already supported projects, it focuses on organising information seminars for applicants and evaluating applications submitted to the national LIFE call. Over the last year, LIFE has been trying to broaden the range of applicants, especially in the area of integrated project submissions. These projects fulfil strategic documents related to nature and biodiversity, climate change, circular economy or clean energy.

Two members of the proposed management team were previously involved in monitoring numerous LIFE projects at the national level, Michal Petrus is the official representative of the national contact point for the LIFE Programme in the Czech Republic and a member of the Selection Committee of the Programme at the European level and during the last two years, Markéta Konečná was the financial manager of the IP LIFE COALA project (total project budget EUR 15 833 242) implemented by the Moravian-Silesian Region in partnership with the Ministry of the Environment.

There have been 34 LIFE projects co-financed and thus administered, evaluated or partly implemented by the Ministry of the Environment in the amount of EUR 117 098 359 in the last 5 years, out of which 17 are still running and there are more to come out of the last call for proposals. Three of the projects belong to integrated projects (their total budget amounting to EUR 51 203 187) and the other 31 belong to traditional projects.

b. Detailed intervention strategy and activities

i. Detailed description of activities and intervention strategy

Enhancing biodiversity

We expect to support primarily complex projects with a system approach to addressing landscape fragmentation issues in the Czech Republic. These projects will combine a detailed description of specific ecosystem or species connectivity problems based on targeted applied research and monitoring data, and will propose functional solutions to reduce fragmentation or mitigate its negative impacts on the addressed issue or area.

In this regard, we anticipate projects focused on currently underrepresented topics (such as airspace fragmentation), innovative approaches, knowledge transfer from abroad or other regions of the Czech Republic, and exploration of new or inadequately studied organism groups or ecosystems.

Furthermore, we aim to support projects directly addressing real and described problems, which should also include mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the proposed solutions. Ideally, the proposed projects should align with national or thematic strategies of the Czech Republic. We anticipate the implementation of initiatives that have already been the subject of expert discussions, based on examples of good practice or available standards. The contributions should lie in the complexity of solutions, specific impacts of implemented changes, and new insights gained from the evaluation phase of implemented measures.

A third type of project focuses on education and awareness-raising for a wide range of target groups - both the public and professionals, not only in nature conservation but also stakeholders such as landscape managers, transportation and energy infrastructure operators, and others. Ideally, these projects should be linked to practical implementation of defragmentation measures and ensure contact with practice. Projects should utilize existing expertise while also stimulating the development of innovative approaches to presenting target topics in relation to fragmentation.

The Programme results under Enhancing Biodiversity pillar will contribute to the reduction of the pressures identified in the following table.

Pressures and Threats Analysis – species protection (Biodiversity Protection Strategy of the Czech Republic in the period 2016 – 2025):

PRESSURES	EVALUATION
Landscape homogenization	The current pressure for intensification of landscape use leads to the disappearance of valuable biotopes, such as differentiated forests, hedgerows, and tree rows, species-rich meadows and pastures, or extensively used water bodies, etc. This causes a decline or disappearance of a significant number of species from the open landscape.
Biotope fragmentation and migration barriers due to the development of transport infrastructure	Landscape fragmentation, mainly caused by the development of transport infrastructure, along with its homogenization, is the most significant factor in species decline, as it leads to the isolation of individual populations. High levels of fragmentation of watercourses by transverse structures and unsuitable longitudinal modifications also persist. High mortality of animals on roads and other infrastructure (including bird collisions with glass surfaces) remains problematic, as well as disturbance of animals by noise or light pollution.
Construction interventions and technical modifications of the landscape	In the context of construction activities, reclamation after mineral extraction, and other activities affecting the landscape and habitats of plants and animals, the methods to minimize adverse effects are not sufficiently utilized (use of nature-based reclamation methods, etc.). Extensive terrain modifications with subsequent homogenization of the environment occur during construction activities. Current river management, including maintaining an excessive number of fish-impermeable transverse obstacles, essentially prevents the maintenance of populations of water-dependent species in favourable conditions.
Climate change	The occurrence of climatic extremes is increasing, spreading in combination with landscape fragmentation, the spread of invasive species, and the loss of some species. Fragmented landscapes prevent natural migration, and other factors increase the risk of endangerment of individual populations and entire species.

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THREATS	EVALUATION
Inappropriate state ownership and subsidy policy	Focusing state policy in the area of property management and subsidy policy preferentially on production and economic effects can lead to a prolongation of the current unfavourable trends in the development of populations of endangered species.
Spread of non-native invasive species	Displacement or extinction of native species due to the spread of non-native invasive species.
Lack of data	Lack of data on species, lack of timely detection of changes in populations, lack of knowledge of causes of threats.

Sustainable tourism

We aim to support complex projects addressing issues related to excessive tourism. These projects will include various measures such as directing visitor traffic, creating alternative routes, establishing visitor management systems, implementing systematic monitoring, and providing information about alternative destinations.

Additionally, comprehensive projects in newly designated protected areas (Protected Landscape Areas, National Parks) will be supported, leveraging established strategies and collaboration. These areas currently lack monitoring and regulation systems for visitor numbers. Establishing a new system, based on successful experiences from other protected areas, is necessary. This offers an opportunity to implement visitor infrastructure and interpret natural and cultural heritage early on, mitigating negative impacts of excessive tourism. The newly established system can serve as a model for other newly designated areas.

The Programme results under Sustainable Tourism pillar will contribute to the elimination of the threats described below as a result of excessive or unsustainable tourism in nature sensitive destinations.

Pressures and Threats Analysis – Tourism (Biodiversity Protection Strategy of the Czech Republic in the period 2016 – 2025):

PRESSURES	EVALUATION
Construction and operation of accommodation and other tourism infrastructure at the expense of valuable habitats and species.	Land encroachment and damage to vegetation cover lead to disturbance of living organisms, damage to species habitats including soils, impacts on aquatic ecosystems, etc. Habitats of wildlife species can be significantly altered (migration routes, hunting grounds, nesting sites, etc.) by the creation of infrastructure tourism.
Transport and movement of persons in specially protected areas or Natura 2000 sites	Soil compaction due to traffic and slumping in intensively visited areas as well as the removal of soil cover by parallel paths and the associated erosion, which may continue even after the impact has ended, have a

	negative impact on soil and vegetation, including the spread of undesirable species. Visitors also disturb many of the animals present (especially vertebrates) and consequently affect their behaviour.
Increase in water consumption, sewage and wastewater discharges	In particular, aquatic and wetland ecosystems are affected by the increase in water consumption (e.g. golf course irrigation, snowmaking) and the discharge of sludge and wastewater from tourism infrastructure into streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs and groundwater.

THREATS	EVALUATION
Exceeding the carrying capacity of (especially protected) areas due to tourism	There is a very significant increase in (domestic and foreign) tourism in the Czech Republic and an even faster growth of tourism in protected areas. There is a need to ensure the sustainability of tourism in protected areas in relation to their current possibilities.
Simplified economic perception of the role of tourism in protected areas	The role of tourism in protected areas is reduced by some actors to an economic role only, while the environmental and educational role is neglected. This leads to political pressures to develop undifferentiated tourism in protected areas.
Development of outdoor/off-road activities in specially protected areas	In the Czech Republic, there is a development of outdoor/off-road activities in protected areas, often activities that do not respect the restrictions arising from the basic and more detailed protection conditions set in specially protected areas and other protected areas (off-road quad bikes, mountain bikes, etc.).

ii. Detailed description of selection process for Programme Components

The **complete description** of the selection process for all open calls foreseen is **given in the Call document (Annex F)**.

The call for large projects will be a two-round call. The submitted grant applications for large projects will be assessed in the following steps:

I. The first round of the call for large projects:

- Assessment of compliance with formal and eligibility requirements for project proposal concepts**
 - The Programme Operator will assess project proposals against formal and eligibility requirements (given by the call conditions and checked against a checklist) to confirm the applicant's eligibility and eliminate formal deficiencies (e.g., missing signatures, non-supplied annexes, etc.).
 - If the eligibility assessment identifies the applicant as ineligible or if the identified formal errors cannot be corrected, the grant application will be excluded from further assessment and automatically rejected.
 - Applicants will be given an opportunity to rectify any formal deficiencies. Failure to do so within the specified deadline will result in exclusion from further assessment.
- Expert assessment of project proposal concepts**

- Project proposals meeting formal and eligibility requirements will proceed to expert assessment, where they will be evaluated by at least two expert evaluators independent of the Programme Operator.
- At least one of the expert assessments will be carried out independently of departmental organisations or technical departments of the Ministry of the Environment.
- Each expert evaluator must provide their CV demonstrating their understanding of the subject matter and experience in assessing project proposals. The final list of nominated expert evaluators will be approved by the Director-General of the Section of Environmental Economics of the Ministry of the Environment.

Assessment criteria:

The assessment criteria are fully described in the Annex G to this document. Each assessment criterion has a corresponding scoring scale. The assessment criteria are grouped in 4 main categories:

- *Relevance – 10 points in total*
 - Environmental Problem Addressed by the Project
 - Compliance of Project Objectives with Environmental Legislation, Strategic Documents and the Programme
- *Impact – 35 points in total*
 - Objectives and Impacts
 - Sustainability
- *Implementation – 30 points in total*
 - Description of Project Implementation (planned work packages)
 - Stakeholders and Target Groups
- *Resources – 25 points in total*
 - Swiss-Czech Partnership
 - Partnership Structure and Project Management
 - Risk Analysis
 - Project Budget

The final result of the assessment will be given in an overall score. Each project proposal concept can receive a maximum of 100 points. Proposals whose overall score will be higher than 50 points (arithmetic average) will be submitted to the Evaluation Committee for further consideration. At the same time, any proposal whose highest and lowest scores received by separate expert evaluators differ by more than 30 points will be submitted to the Evaluation Committee.

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

3. Evaluation Committee assessment of project proposal concepts

- The Evaluation Committee will be approved by the Director-General of the Section of Environmental Economics of the Ministry of the Environment.
- The Evaluation Committee will review the submitted projects in the order of the final scores obtained in the expert assessments and will review the expert opinions of the evaluators. It may adjust individual project scores, for example in cases such as:

- Scores of expert assessments of one expert evaluator are unreasonably harsh/soft in all cases of his/her assessment. In such a case, all scores of that evaluator will be changed.
 - An expert assessment of a project proposal is not clearly in line with assessment criteria.
 - Should the Evaluation Committee change the assessment of a project(s), it must give clear and detailed reasons for its decision. This change will always be justified in the minutes of the Evaluation Committee meeting. The Evaluation Committee shall decide on the change by resolution.
 - The Evaluation Committee will review the conditions proposed by the expert evaluators. It may set specific conditions for each project that the applicant must fulfil to receive support.
 - Based on its assessment, the Committee will rank the projects and decide which ones advance to the second round. Ideally, the total eligible expenditure of these projects should be 200% of the allocation for each pillar in this call
 - The Evaluation Committee may also reallocate funds between pillars if one of the pillars does not receive enough high-quality projects, resulting in unspent funds.
- 4. Steering Committee**
- The results of the selection process of the first round will be communicated to the members of the Steering Committee.
- 5. Notification letter to applicants**
- All applicants will receive a notification letter signed by the Department Director informing them of the outcome of the first round of the selection process. Successful applicants will be invited to complete their proposals and submit full proposals with all annexes by the specified deadline.

II. The second round of the call for large projects

1. Assessment of compliance with formal requirements for full proposals

- The Programme Operator will assess full proposals against formal requirements (given by the call conditions and checked against a checklist) to eliminate formal deficiencies (e.g., missing signatures, non-supplied annexes, etc.).
- Applicants will be given an opportunity to rectify any formal deficiencies. Failure to do so within the specified deadline will result in exclusion from further assessment.

2. Expert assessment of full proposals

- Full proposals meeting formal requirements will proceed to expert assessment, where they will be evaluated by at least two expert evaluators independent of the Programme Operator.
- At least one of the expert assessments will be carried out independently of departmental organisations or technical departments of the Ministry of the Environment.
- At this stage, the expert evaluators assess in particular whether, according to the full description of individual actions, the project objectives can be achieved with expected quality of outputs, within set timeframes and at the financial costs foreseen.
- The expert assessment may again include proposing conditions that the applicant must meet in order for the project to be supported. These conditions will be discussed by the Evaluation Committee and the acceptance of such conditions must be confirmed by a decision of the Evaluation Committee.

3. Evaluation Committee assessment of full proposals

- Representatives of the SCO and NCU will be invited to take part in the Evaluation Committee meeting.
- The Evaluation Committee, approved by the Director-General of the Section of Environmental Economics of the Ministry of the Environment, will review the expert assessments and may adjust individual project scores for example in cases such as:
 - Scores of expert assessments of one expert evaluator are unreasonably harsh/soft in all cases of his/her assessment. In such a case, all scores of that evaluator will be changed.
 - An expert assessment of a full proposal is clearly not in line with assessment criteria.
- Should the Evaluation Committee change the assessment of a project(s), it must give clear and detailed reasons for its decision. This change will always be justified in the minutes of the Evaluation Committee meeting. The Evaluation Committee shall decide on the change by resolution.
- The Evaluation Committee will review the conditions proposed by the expert evaluators. It may set specific conditions for each project that the applicant must fulfil to receive support.
- The Evaluation Committee will decide whether to recommend the project for support, recommend it with conditions, recommend it with a lower level of support or not recommend it. The Evaluation Committee will draw up a list of the full project proposals to be recommended for support in their ranking order.

4. Steering Committee assessment of full proposals

- Members of the Steering Committee of the Support Measure with a casting vote are representatives from the following institutions: the Swiss Cooperation Programme Office, the National Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic. Other persons may attend the Steering Committee meeting as observers with an advisory vote.
- Based on the list submitted by the Evaluation Committee, the Steering Committee members will discuss the recommended projects and decide on the approved and reserved projects under both pillars of the Programme. If they express reservations about certain projects, they may decide to impose additional conditions for granting financial support. The Steering Committee members also have the right to refuse funding for specific projects with proper justification. The conclusions of the discussion will be included in the minutes of the Steering Committee meeting.
- The Steering Committee shall adopt a final opinion. It shall produce a list of successful projects (projects ready for support) in a ranking order and a reserve list under both pillars of the Programme for large projects. In case there were a project not fully ready for implementation at this stage, the Committee shall set a time limit for completion of the preparation works needed, which shall not exceed 12 months.

5. Verification of the evaluation process

- Prior to the final decision on the award of a grant, the Programme Operator will ensure the verification of the selection process, i.e. verification that the selection process has been carried out in accordance with the Support Measure Set-up, the Regulation and the terms of the call. The aim of the verification is to verify the transparency, integrity and compliance of the evaluation process with the terms of the call and the legal framework of the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme. The Programme Operator submits a summary of the conclusions of the verification to the Steering Committee.

III. Call for Small-Grant Scheme

The basic principles and procedures will be similar to those of large projects. The call for Small-Grant Scheme will be a single-round call. First, the compliance of the grant application with formal and eligibility requirements will be assessed, followed by an expert assessment by approved expert evaluators against the technical qualitative criteria. The final selection of projects will be confirmed by the Evaluation Committee. On the basis of this final decision, the Grant Decision will be issued.

iii. Communication activities

Communication activities will be carried out in several ways so that the information on the Programme, its results and use can spread out to a wider audience. We attach great importance to communication activities towards applicants as well as target groups. Using right communication channels will ensure a sufficient number of quality projects and, later on, raise greater awareness of the activities carried out by projects and help multiply their benefits and the impact of projects results.

We are going to organise the following events during the Programme implementation:

1. **Launch Conference** - it will be held within 1 month following the Support Measure Setup entering into force. The term of the conference will be scheduled so as to allow for all the preparations to be made in time – it is directly linked to the approval of the Programme and the approval of financing the Programme management costs. The launch conference will be a festive event attended by representatives of the donor, the NCU, the Programme Operator and other important stakeholders, e.g. representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development, CzechTourism, the Chamber of Commerce, representatives of the Association of Regions and the Association of Towns and Municipalities, the Association of NGOs, etc. The media will also be informed, the conference will be advertised at the website of the MoE, the NCU and a press release will be issued in at least one media.
2. **Information seminars for applicants** - we plan to organize at least 2 information seminars: an online seminar, which will be held as soon as possible after the call is announced, and a second, in-person seminar, which could potentially be combined with the launch conference and will take place no later than 2 months after the call announcement. Any further seminars will be organized as needed, either in person or online. Participation in the seminars is open to all potential grant applicants. The aim of the seminars is to provide information on the call for proposals, the purpose of the Programme, eligible costs, and other conditions for submitting a project proposal.
3. Another outreach activity will involve organizing **kick-off seminars for beneficiaries**. At least one in-person seminar will be held in Prague, which can be recorded and made available online for a broader audience of beneficiaries. The aim of these seminars is to familiarize the beneficiaries with the project implementation rules, the Programme administrators on the MoE side, and other support activities, including networking with other projects and Swiss partners who could contribute to the project objectives.
4. The Department of International Programmes and Projects has an **extensive list of e-mail contacts** (about 4.000) acquired during the implementation of other Programmes. This list of contacts is used to inform about calls for proposals and to contact potential applicants.
5. A **final conference** will be held to present the results of the Programme after the completion of the projects implementation. The dissemination will be carried out through a website and a press release, and representatives of selected media will be invited.

Information regarding the Programme implementation will be regularly posted on the Ministry of the Environment's website and its social media channels. Additionally, we plan to disseminate information through press releases focused on environmental protection, such as in the departmental magazine Priority, or on the websites of relevant organizations (through NGOs, Ekolist.cz, the Nature Protection magazine, the Union of Towns and Municipalities, Czech-Tourism, etc.). Project beneficiaries will also provide information to the public as part of the project implementation process.

Priority magazine has been published by the State Environmental Fund of the Czech Republic since 2008. Its aim is to inform representatives of municipalities and towns, public institutions and other entities about the subsidy policy of the European Union and the Czech Republic in the field of the environment, to share experience with the use of subsidies and to present examples of good practice. The magazine has a circulation of 10,000 copies eleven times a year and is distributed free of charge to subscribers' mailboxes. Interested parties can subscribe via an online form. The magazine is available for download in electronic form at www.priorita.cz.

Ekolist.cz is an online daily whose aim is to provide information about nature and the environment. Ekolist.cz does not align with any interest group and does not endorse specific solutions or projects. Ekolist.cz began publishing in December 1997 and is a suitable platform for reaching non-profit and volunteer organizations active in environmental protection, especially.

iv. Detailed implementation schedule

	A Scenario	B Scenario
Programme approval	June 2024	June 2024
Launch conference	Within 1 month following the Support Measure Setup entering into force	Within 1 month following the Support Measure Setup entering into
Call announcement for large projects – 1 st stage (proposal concepts) – within 3 months of the Programme approval at the latest	July 2024	September 2024
Information seminar for applicants – within 2 months of the call announcement	September 2024	October 2014
Call end for large projects	October 2024	Beginning of December 2024
Administration check and expert assessment of project proposal concepts (large projects)	October - November 2024	December 2024 - February 2025
Call announcement for SGS: 3-4 months after Programme approval, duration of the call 3 months	End of August 2024	October 2024
Evaluation Committee meeting for large projects – selection of projects for support	Beginning of December 2024	February 2025

1 st Steering Committee meeting – within 6 months of the Support Measure Setup entry into force	Mid December 2024 (formal meeting only, without projects confirmation)	Mid December 2024 (formal meeting only, without projects confirmation)
End of call for SGS	End of November 2024	February 2025
Administration check and expert assessment of project proposal concepts (SGS)	December 2024 – February 2025	February-March 2025
Advanced information seminar	January 2025	March 2025
Evaluation Committee meeting for SGS	March 2025	April 2025
Issuing grant award decisions - SGS	April 2025	May 2025
Kick-off seminar for applicants - SGS	May 2025	June 2025
End of call for large projects – 2 nd stage (submission of complete grant applications)	End of February 2025	April 2025
Administration check and expert assessment of submitted project proposals – 2 nd stage	End of March 2025	May 2025
Evaluation Committee meeting – selection of large projects for implementation	April 2025	June 2025
2 nd Steering Committee meeting – selection of full project proposals confirmed	May 2025	June 2025
Issuing Grant Award Decisions – large projects - 2 nd stage	May - December 2025	July - December 2025
Possible start for large projects implementation	June 2025	July 2025
Kick-off meeting for beneficiaries	June 2025	September 2025
Another Steering Committee meeting – another SC meeting takes place once a year at least	1.Q. 2026	1.Q. 2026
Final Programme conference	June 2029	June 2029

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c. Logframe

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators (incl. target values and baseline)	Sources & Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks (External Factors)
Impact	Impact Indicators	Impact Sources and Means of Verification	
Contribution to enhancing biodiversity by landscape permeability achieved and the adverse effects of overtourism reduced.	Number of nature valuable sites ¹ indicating positive change or trend regarding biodiversity as a result of improved landscape permeability and favourable visitor behaviour. ² B: 0, T: 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project applications and monitoring reports. Statement of the expert section of the Ministry of the Environment responsible for nature protection. 	

¹ Sites - all forms of specially protected areas (national parks, protected landscape areas, national nature reserves and nature reserves, national natural monuments and natural monuments) and Natura 2000 sites (sites of European importance and bird areas), sites in the open countryside with a significant representation of species according to definition of species threatened by overtourism and landscape fragmentation, not only sites in which measures are implemented, but also sites whose biodiversity is directly affected by the implemented measures or plans.

² This indicator measures the number of sites of nature conservation value where there has been a positive change or positive trend in relation to monitored species or visitor behaviour.

Outcomes (Support Measure objectives /purpose)	Outcome Indicators	Outcome: Sources and Means of Verification	Outcome Assumptions & Risks
1.Intensive tourism mapped and regulated.	1.1 Number of (affected) species ³ benefiting from the reduction of overtourism pressure. B: 0, T: 50 1.2 Area of nature valuable sites ⁴ indicating positive change or trend in favourable visitor behaviour. ⁵ B: 0, T: 800 km² 1.3 Number of areas with a newly developed (unified) strategy or system solution to sustainable tourism in large territorial units of nature valuable sites ⁴ . B: 0, T: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management plans for specially protected areas or Natura 2000 sites Monitoring carried out within projects (initial, if available). Project monitoring reports. Area of the addressed territory. Targeted areas where sustainable visitor management strategies are applied. Area affected by the project. River basin plans, national strategic materials and concepts, species action and management plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and cooperation from land managers, local governments and communities. Aligning interventions with national policies and regulations.
2.Landscape permeable for target species.	2.1 Number of (affected) species ³ benefiting from connected landscape units. B: 0, T: 30 2.2 The area of nature valuable sites ⁴ indicating positive change or trend in landscape permeability. B: 0, T: 100km² 2.3 Area covered by the monitoring of the impact of landscape fragmentation on populations of target species. B: 0, T: 100km²		

³ Endangered species according to red lists (CR, EN, VU) or protected species according to the Nature and Landscape Protection Act (Decree No. 395/1992 Coll.)

⁴ Sites - all forms of specially protected areas (national parks, protected landscape areas, national nature reserves and nature reserves, national natural monuments and natural monuments) and Natura 2000 sites (sites of European importance and bird areas), sites in the open countryside with a significant representation of species according to definition of species threatened by overtourism and landscape fragmentation, not only sites in which measures are implemented, but also sites whose biodiversity is directly affected by the implemented measures or plans.

⁵ This indicator monitors the area of territory that has been positively affected by the implementation of the programme measures and where a positive trend has been observed in relation to the monitored species or visitor behaviour.

Outputs: Support Measure deliverables/results per outcome	Output Indicators	Output: Sources and Means of Verification	Output Assumptions & Risks
1. Measures aimed at the distribution of visitors considering the needs of tourists and visitors, as well as the condition and limits of the site and the needs of local residents implemented.	1.1 Number of measures aimed at the distribution of visitors. ⁶ B: 0, T: 20 1.2 Number of newly created environmentally friendly transport solutions. B: 0, T: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building permits, entries in the Land Registry. ▪ Project monitoring reports. ▪ Handover protocols. ▪ Commissioning reports ▪ Trial operation results. ▪ Property records. ▪ Surveys, investigations. ▪ Documentation, handover protocols, delivery notes, final reports. ▪ Monitoring reports. ▪ Presentations, training modules, training attendance sheets. ▪ Photo documentation. ▪ Resolution of the responsible authority adopting the strategy. ▪ Technical certification of equipment (proof of ecological sustainability). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability of sufficient funding to implement the measures. ▪ Existence of the necessary monitoring data for decision-making. ▪ Insufficient staff capacity. ▪ Insufficient time availability. ▪ Securing permission from the competent authorities.
2. Sustainable tourism system solutions elaborated and submitted to relevant authorities.	2.1 Number of elaborated and submitted proposals for system solutions in the field of sustainable tourism (e.g. strategies). B: 0, T: 5 2.2 Number of elaborated and submitted system solutions for visitor infrastructure in newly designated large-scale protected areas. B: 0, T: 3		
3. Measures aimed at unifying visitor monitoring developed.	3.1 Number of newly created monitoring points (microwave, control and reservation systems). B: 0, T: 30		
4. Knowledge of the general public and expertise of professionals on nature conservation related to the sustainable tourism increased.	4.1 Number of established awareness-raising facilities ⁷ . B: 0, T: 5 4.2 Number of individual visits to newly established awareness-raising facilities. B: 0, T: 5 000 4.3 Number of organized awareness-raising events. B: 0, T: 15 4.4 Number of professionals trained in nature conservation and sustainable tourism development. B: 0, T: 80		
5. Specific solutions for the defragmentation of air, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems implemented.	5.1 Number of implemented measures (repaired/built fish passes, repaired/built ecoducts		

⁶ Alternative destinations created or promoted in the vicinity of sites affected by overtourism.

⁷ Information centres, visitor centres (Houses of Nature), nature trails, outdoor expositions, information panels, special information applications.

	and other technical facilities and structures designed to ensure the passability of the landscape). B: 0, T: 5		
6. Monitoring of landscape defragmentation in environmentally valuable sites conducted.	6.1 Number of environmentally valuable sites ⁸ monitored for landscape defragmentation. B: 0, T: 2 6.2 Number of monitored species affected by the defragmentation of the landscape. B: 0, T: 7		
7. Expertise of professionals and awareness of the general public on nature protection in the field of landscape fragmentation increased.	7.1 Number of organised training and awareness-raising events to eliminate biodiversity loss. B: 0, T: 20 7.2. Number of professionals trained in methods to eliminate biodiversity loss. B: 0, T: 100 7.3 Number of visitors at public awareness-raising events. B: 0, T: 500		

⁸ Protected areas and surroundings areas and areas connected with protected areas

d. Swiss Support Measure Partner(s)

There is no Programme partner at the Programme level.

e. Stakeholder consultations

Stakeholder consultations were crucial in establishing the Programme at an early stage of its preparation. The first seminars, organised separately for the Biodiversity pillar and the Sustainable Tourism pillar, took place before the signing of the Framework Agreement in June 2023. They helped to further define the possible thematic areas of the proposed Programme "Sustainable Tourism and Biodiversity Enhancement". The stakeholder consultations held as part of the formal preparation of the Programme in February 2024 showed that the general set-up of the Programme was accepted by stakeholders without any major objections. However, discussions were focused on the details related to the practical implementation of the Programme measures. These details are described and dealt with in more detail in a separate annex to this section (see Annex E) and, where appropriate, reflected in the proposed setup of the Programme. In all four rounds of consultations, the participation of representatives of the NCU and representatives of the Swiss donor significantly aided us (in February 2023 representatives of both the SCO and SECO, in April 2023 representatives of the SCO and representatives of the NCU).

The basic character and focus of the Programme emerged from the first phase of consultations in 2023, where representatives from sectoral organizations (Administrations of protected areas – the National Parks and the Protected Landscape Areas), universities, scientific research institutions, regional and local governments, and the non-profit sector expressed their needs and visions in the area of biodiversity and sustainable tourism, especially in nature valuable sites. Based on this stakeholder feedback, several working meetings were held between the concerned departments of the Ministry of the Environment (MoE), and the underlying framework of the draft Programme was developed and submitted to the Minister of the MoE for approval. From this approved material, the first version of the Support Measure Proposal was developed and submitted to the Swiss donor as part of the formal preparation of the Programme proposal.

The topics that have been included among the proposed topics for support on the stakeholders' request include:

- in the area of sustainable tourism, most of the proposed measures have been incorporated into the individual thematic areas. The common denominator was a comprehensive approach, multiple partnership structure, measures addressing systemic changes, and embedding in the strategic framework of a larger territorial unit. These include, for example, strategic and conceptual solutions to overtourism based on long-term research on tourist arrivals and analysis of legal instruments leading to the implementation and compliance with the necessary measures, support for digital monitoring - dissemination of the right type of information towards individual target groups of potential visitors, or the creation of SMART solutions in the immediate vicinity of naturally rare sites for the purpose of directing tourism. Topics that were not included among the supported themes include the use of Swiss know-how in the case of train transport or projects focused exclusively on the promotion of clean mobility as a means of channeling visitor flows, or soft projects without follow-up studies or analyses.

- In the area of biodiversity enhancement, the proposed topics for support included, among others, measures of migration passage (in water, air and on land), defragmentation measures, fish passage modification, monitoring of the impact of fragmentation on monitored species, environmental education activities for farmers, the general and professional public in relation to biodiversity enhancement and sustainable tourism or dealing with invasive species. On the other hand, activities such as routine management measures in given sites, land lease or purchase, or forest management were not included among the supported topics as this is in conflict with the Programme rules or these are activities that are primarily targeted by other subsidy titles.
- During the consultations, the stakeholders, especially NGOs, strongly advocated the requirement to support the financing of the preparation of project documentation for projects whose implementation would be financed from other sources / grant titles outside the Czech-Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme. This request was rejected from the point of view of the Programme Facilitator, as this would not be a direct way of meeting the objectives of the Programme, and it is also a capacity building measure, which is the specialisation of other national or European funding sources.
- In the case of the definition of supportable SGS thematic areas, some wording has been clarified or supplemented in the light of stakeholder comments.

At all times, the Programme Operator put an emphasis on that the process of stakeholder consultation, as well as the selection and outreach to stakeholders, was as **open, transparent and inclusive** as possible, and that it allowed various stakeholders to contribute their perspectives to the relevance and feasibility of the proposed Programme.

f. Tentative Budget

i. Detailed tentative budget

Budget No. 1 - Management Costs – CHF 740.900

- **Personnel: CHF 517.500**, eligible expenditure foreseen – salaries of internal employees working for the Programme, short-term contracts (expert evaluators, technical experts monitoring projects implementation).
- **External expertise and services: CHF 184.500**, eligible expenditure foreseen – public procurement planned – 1. State Aid assessment (use of external/legal services to ensure assessment of the presence of state aid in projects, assessment of compliance of measures with de minimis aid or with GBER/ ABER block exemptions, consultations with Czech Competition Authority and Ministry of Agriculture, completion of relevant forms for state aid notification), 2. technical supervision (assessment of the correctness of the implementation of technical projects by an expert company), 3. visitor analysis (assessment of the fulfilment of outcome indicators, comparison with initial values, determination of trends, acquisition of data and information on visitor traffic to sites, e.g. from mobile data providers), 4. External Audit - verification of the evaluation process; 5. expenditure related to the organization of conferences, meetings and seminars.
- **Swiss experts and partners – N/A**
- **Travel costs: CHF 36.500**, eligible expenditure foreseen – travel expenses related to domestic and foreign trips for employees of the Ministry of the Environment and staff covered by the Programme related to on-site monitoring of the supported projects, capacity building events and possible exchange of best practices between Switzerland and beneficiary states.

- **Equipment and IT system: CHF 3.400**, eligible expenditure foreseen – costs related to the purchase of a laptop with accessories, small technical equipment (headphones, data carriers, etc.).
- **Publicity and visibility: CHF 11.700**, eligible expenditure foreseen – creation and publication of articles informing about the Programme, purchase of promotional items.
- **Miscellaneous: CHF 6.300**, eligible expenditure foreseen – costs related to visits of representatives of Switzerland to Czechia.

Budget No. 2 – Pre-defined Project – N/A

Budget No. 3 – Open Call 1 (Sustainable Tourism) – CHF 27.5 million

Budget No. 4 – Open Call 2 (Enhancing Biodiversity) – CHF 12.5 mil.

Budget No. 5 – Open Call 3 (Small Grant Scheme) – CHF 4.4 mil.

Budget in Total – CHF 45.180 mil.

For detailed budget see Annex B.

ii. Tentative Disbursement Plan

Reimbursement Period	1 1-6/24	2 7-12/24	3 1-6/25	4 7-12/25	5 1-6/26	6 7-12/26
Estimated reimbursement of Swiss Contribution in CHF	0	0	460 000	2 000 000	4 300 000	4 300 000
Reimbursement Period	7 1-6/27	8 7-12/27	9 1-6/28	10 7-12/28	11 1-6/29	12 7-12/29
Estimated reimbursement of Swiss Contribution in CHF	2 300 000	6 300 000	4 300 000	6 300 000	4 300 000	3 840 000

g. Risk Analysis and Risk Management

Risk	Impact [1 – 5]	Likelihood [1 – 5]	Risk level	Mitigation measure(s)
DEVELOPMENT RISKS				
Risk of not fulfilling Programme outputs defined in Logframe table, which may threaten the achievement of Programme outcomes as well jeopardise the Programme Impact	4	2	Low-Medium	This risk will already be mitigated during the evaluation of the submitted project proposals. Each applicant will have to demonstrate in its application which programme outputs and outcomes it is committed to delivering and the evaluators must make an informed judgement as to whether this commitment can be realistically met by the proposed activities and resources. The evaluators will be persons with many years of experience in projects assessment and will be trained appropriately.
Insufficient staff capacity on the part of the Programme Operator due to underestimation of staff involvement in the Programme set-up or high staff rotation.	3	1	Low	The staff capacities have been set up on the basis of the experience with the management of the previous round of the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme. There is a long-term stable staffing situation in the Department, with an additional 10 staff members available to replace missing members of the management team on a temporary basis if necessary. This is a continuous mitigation measure.
Insufficiently established management structure at the team management level.	3	1	Low	The risk is mitigated by the experience gained in the past implementing other financial mechanisms. The governance structure proposed reflects common best practices. The MoE Directive No 1/2024 on Risk Management System requires managers to establish and maintain an internal control system that is capable of identifying, evaluating and minimising risks arising in connection with the implementation of the approved objectives and targets of public authorities in a timely manner.

Non-compliance with the Programme conditions by the final beneficiaries threatening the fulfilment of the Programme objectives.	3	2	Low-Medium	The risk will be eliminated by projects monitoring and establishing procedures and sanctions for non-compliance with the Programme conditions. These conditions will be included in the Manual for Beneficiaries.
Lack of interest in the announced calls by applicants, low competition among submitted projects and consequently low quality of supported projects.	4	2	Low-Medium	In the Biodiversity pillar, this risk is reinforced by the existence of a two-period competitive call, which could discourage potential applicants. In the Sustainable Tourism pillar, this risk is reinforced by the absence of a similar call, for which applicants may not be sufficiently prepared. The thematic focus of the support was defined, inter alia, on the basis of identified needs and lack of funding in the supported areas. The selection of specific topics to be supported was consulted and prepared over a long period of time with the Programme's stakeholders, who unanimously expressed their interest in the implementation of these measures. The calls will be promoted well in advance to the target groups through various media channels including direct outreach (Ekolist - targeting NGOs, the MoE website, the Priority Magazine, addressing the Union of Towns and Municipalities, tourism agencies, Council of Geoparks and others).
Lack of political support in promoting the objectives of the Programme and bureaucratic obstacles threatening the timely implementation of the Programme	2	1	Low	The management of the Ministry, headed by the Minister, is and will continue to be regularly informed about the preparation and implementation of the Programme at management meetings. By giving their consent with submitted material, they participate in the approval of the final Programme set-up and its implementation. The procedures for the implementation of

				the Programme are set in accordance with the Ministry's internal procedures and with regard to the necessary timeframes required for each procedural step.
FIDUCIARY RISKS				
Spending of subsidy funds in an unprofitable, inefficient or unequal way	3	1	Low	Transparent selection of projects, multi-level financial and management control. Compliance with internal MoE Directive No.1/2024 on the Risk Management System at the Ministry of the Environment, which, among other things, addresses the issue of preventing corrupt behaviour.
FINANCIAL RISKS				
Insufficient provision of compulsory national co-financing due to the reduction of the state budget	4	1	Low-Medium	The funds are pre-allocated and earmarked for the Programme (in the budget they are kept under a separate analytical account) on the basis of the government's appropriations. Any negative monetary differences due to exchange rate fluctuations will be covered by the national budget.
ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS				
Negative impact of the Programme on the environment The results of the Programme will be contrary to the positive expected change or will be unsustainable	3	2	Low-Medium	The impacts of the implementation of the projects could have a negative impact on the target species or habitats under certain, especially unforeseeable circumstances. These risks will be continuously monitored during project implementation and, if identified, will have to be replaced by alternative measures leading to the foreseen objective.
SECURITY RISKS				
Leakage of sensitive or personal data in connection with the handling of sensitive data from applicants/beneficiaries	3	1	Low	Compliance with the internal regulation of the MoE Directive No.6/2022 on the Protection of Personal Data, especially during the evaluation process of project applications and in the case of media coverage of projects and their outputs.
Overall Risk Level Support Measure			Medium-low	

Comments on the overall risk level (if any)

The overall risk level has been assessed as medium-low. We believe the risks identified will be effectively managed if they occur, mainly due to extensive experience of both the NCU and PO workers involved in the Programme set up and implementation.

h. Monitoring and Steering

Result-oriented monitoring system of the overall fulfilment of Programme objectives (Programme outcomes), both for the Biodiversity as well as Sustainable Tourism pillar, will comprise two levels of monitoring, the results monitoring at the Programme as well as project level.

Results monitoring at the Programme level:

In the grant application, each applicant will be required to fill in which Programme outcomes their project is linked to and which outcome indicators their project will aim to meet. This information will also appear on the Grant Award Decision and will thus be binding for the beneficiaries. Monitoring reports from beneficiaries will include an assessment of the fulfilment of these outcome indicators. Programme administrators will regularly check the progress made towards meeting the set Programme outcomes, comment on it in Annual and Final reports submitted to the Paying Authority with the request for payment and present the results of the progress achieved at each of the Steering Committee meetings of the Programme.

Results monitoring at the project level:

The final beneficiary will prepare interim progress reports during project implementation. These reports will directly impact project financing; the next payment will only be made after these reports are approved. The reports will consist of a technical and a financial part.

The technical part will include:

- A brief description of project progress during the given period
- Progress in fulfilling output and outcome indicators
- A plan for the remaining implementation period
- An overview of on-site inspections
- Promotional activities
- Partner participation

The financial part will include:

- An overview of the statement of expenditure and income
- Cash-flow management against the expected plan (particularly for large projects)
- Movements on the project bank account
- An overview of purchased equipment, its location, and documentation

The fulfilment of the Programme indicators must be monitored within each project. Each project application will include a table for tracking the performance of the Programme indicators to which the applicant commits. At the application stage, each applicant must select at least one

Programme outcome indicator and one Programme output indicator (as defined in the Programme Logframe). The fulfilment of these indicators will be monitored and evaluated during project implementation.

Based on stakeholder consultations, it was agreed that applicants will design their own additional output indicators to monitor and track their project progress. The final beneficiary must inform the Programme Operator about the project progress in such a way that the delay between consecutive reports does not exceed 6 months. The final report must be submitted no later than 3 months after project completion, as stated in the grant agreement.

Project results will be monitored by the Programme administrators' staff dedicated to Programme implementation. For on-site inspections, additional experts with technical experience and field expertise will be recruited for short-term working agreements. (Please note, we expect an additional full-time SGS administration position will need to be created for the purpose of SGS administration and monitoring, along with one or two short-term agreements for professional monitoring, mainly of large projects). The aim of continuous monitoring is to identify any potential risks to achieving set objectives in a timely manner, ensure their elimination, or find ways to prevent them by introducing appropriate precautionary measures.

In case of Programme evaluation by the NCU or the Swiss side based on DAC/OECD standards, the Programme Operator will provide necessary assistance in planning and designing the evaluations and will actively participate during their implementation. Switzerland, or a third party mandated by it, has the right to participate in all evaluations commissioned by the Czech side.

5. List of Annexes

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#	Annex
A.	Signatures
B.	Budget
C.	Organizational chart
D.	CVs of the members of the Support Measure management team
E.	Stakeholders consultations - comments
F.	Call document for Applicants – large projects
G.	The assessment criteria

Annex A: Signatures

The first stage proposal

(Signed per electronic signature in English)

(Signed per electronic signature in English)

For The Ministry of the Environment as the Programme Operator

For The Ministry of Finance as the National Coordination Unit

Tomáš Kažmierski / Director - Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments

Zuzana Matyášová / Director - Department of International Relations

The second stage proposal

(Signed per electronic signature in English)

(Signed per electronic signature in English)

For The Ministry of the Environment as the Programme Operator

For The Ministry of Finance as the National Coordination Unit

Tomáš Kažmierski / Director - Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments

Zuzana Matyášová / Director - Department of International Relations

Annex B: Budget

Annex C: Organizational Chart of the Ministry of Environment

Annex D: CVs of the members of the Support Measure management team

Annex E: Process and Outcomes of the Stakeholder Consultations

Annex F: Draft call for proposals for large projects

Annex G: Draft assessment criteria of call for proposals

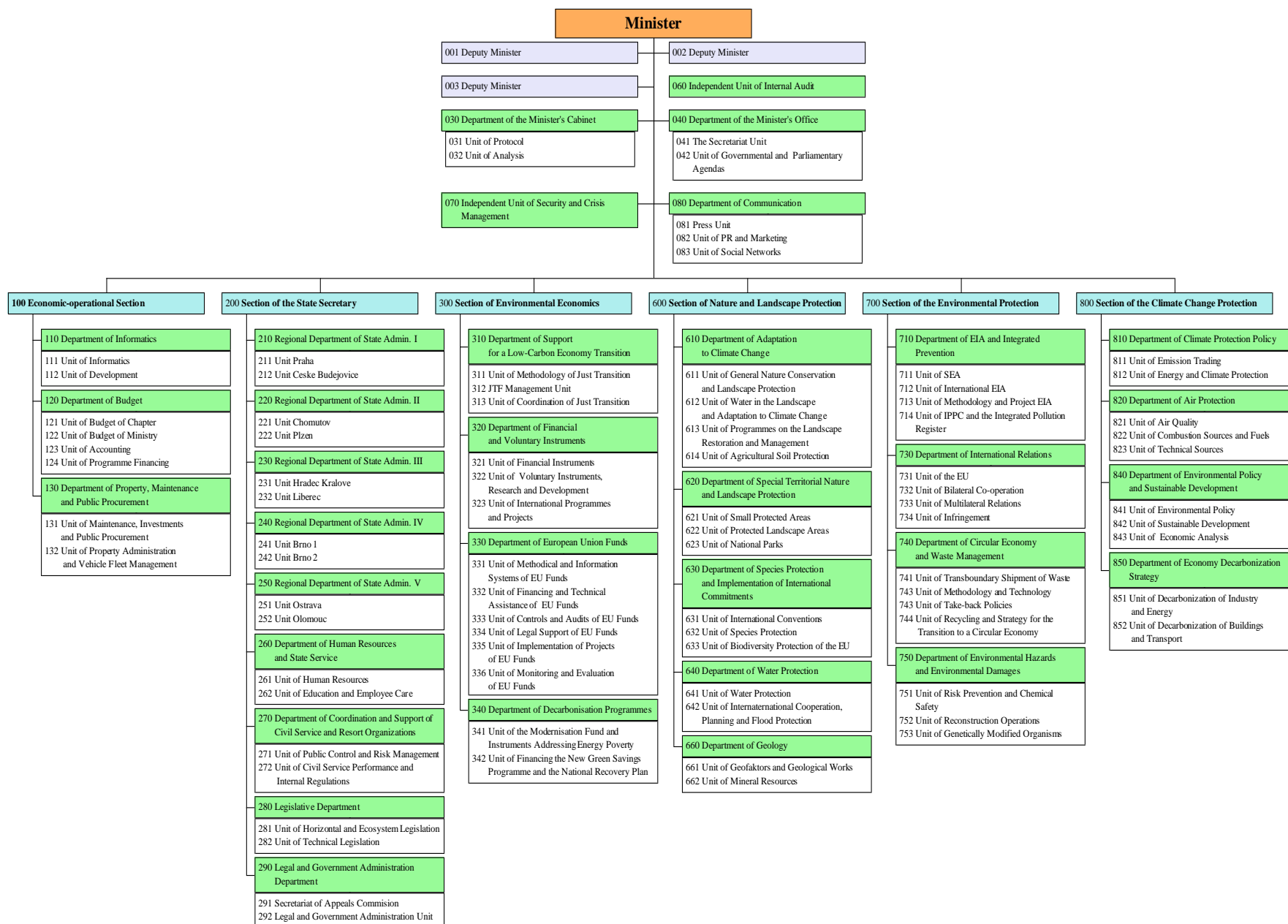
Budget

Instructions

No	Budget items	CZK Unit costs	CZK Quantity	CZK Indicative Budget 100%	% Co-financing rate (CH co-financing)	CHF Swiss contribution (co-financing)	CZK Quantity	CZK Budget Year 2024	CZK Quantity	CZK Budget Year 2025	CZK Quantity	CZK Budget Year 2026	CZK Quantity	CZK Budget Year 2027	CZK Quantity	CZK Budget Year 2028	CZK Quantity	CZK Budget Year 2029
	Exchange rate CHF/CZK	24.00																
1	Management Costs			18 235 294,16	85,00%	645 833,33		2 861 000,00		3 514 294,16		2 764 000,00		2 472 300,00		4 302 000,00		2 202 000,00
1.1	Personnel			12 420 000,00				1 560 000,00		2 500 000,00		2 280 000,00		2 160 300,00		2 280 000,00		1 520 000,00
N/A	Programme Administrator - full-time	80 000,00	62,00	4 960 000,00			6,00	480 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	8,00	640 000,00
N/A	SGS Administrator - full-time	80 000,00	62,00	4 960 000,00			6,00	480 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	12,00	960 000,00	8,00	640 000,00
N/A	SGS Project Monitor - short time (monthly rate)	20 000,00	50,00	1 000 000,00			0,00	0,00	8,00	160 000,00	12,00	240 000,00	12,00	240 000,00	12,00	240 000,00	6,00	120 000,00
N/A	SGS Project Monitor - short time (hour rate)	400,00	1 500,00	600 000,00			0,00	0,00	300,00	120 000,00	300,00	120 000,00	300,00	300,00	300,00	120 000,00	300,00	120 000,00
N/A	Project Evaluators - evaluation of large Project	3 000,00	150,00	450 000,00			100,00	300 000,00	50,00	150 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Project Evaluators - evaluation of SGS Project	1 500,00	300,00	450 000,00			200,00	300 000,00	100,00	150 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
1.2	External expertise and services			4 429 000,00				1 185 000,00		762 000,00		202 000,00		190 000,00		1 690 000,00		400 000,00
N/A	Public Procurement - Technical Supervision	170 000,00	5,00	850 000,00			0,00	0,00	1,00	170 000,00	1,00	170 000,00	1,00	170 000,00	1,00	170 000,00	1,00	170 000,00
N/A	Public Procurement - State Aid Evaluation	370 000,00	2,00	740 000,00			1,00	370 000,00	1,00	370 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Public Procurement - Overtourism/Visitors Analysis	1 500 000,00	1,00	1 500 000,00			0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	1,00	1 500 000,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Public Procurement - External Audit	454 000,00	1,00	454 000,00			1,00	454 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Launch Conference (40 Participants)	120 000,00	1,00	120 000,00			1,00	120 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Information Seminars for Applicants (70 Part.)	60 000,00	2,00	120 000,00			2,00	120 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Selection Committee	12 000,00	4,00	48 000,00			1,00	12 000,00	2,00	24 000,00	1,00	12 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Steering Committee	20 000,00	6,00	120 000,00			1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00
N/A	Kick-off Meetings (70 Part.)	89 000,00	3,00	267 000,00			1,00	89 000,00	2,00	178 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Final Conference (80 Part.)	210 000,00	1,00	210 000,00			0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	1,00	210 000,00
1.3	Swiss experts and partners			0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00
N/A	Indicate function of each expert or partner (each person or organisation one line) incl. relevant unit			0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00
1.4	Travel costs			876 000,00				36 000,00		72 000,00		232 000,00		72 000,00		232 000,00		232 000,00
N/A	Domestic Travel Costs (transportation, refreshments, accommodation)	3 000,00	132,00	396 000,00			12,00	36 000,00	24,00	72 000,00	24,00	72 000,00	24,00	72 000,00	24,00	72 000,00	24,00	72 000,00
N/A	International Travel Costs (transportation, per diems, accommodation, etc.)	160 000,00	3,00	480 000,00			0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	1,00	160 000,00	0,00	0,00	1,00	160 000,00	1,00	160 000,00
1.5	Equipment and IT system			80 294,16				70 000,00		10 294,16		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00
N/A	Notebook incl. Accessories	35 000,00	2,00	70 000,00			2,00	70 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
N/A	Small Techniques (Headphones, USB Data Medium etc.)	10 294,16	1,00	10 294,16			0,00	0,00	1,00	10 294,16	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
1.6	Publicity and visibility			280 000,00				10 000,00		140 000,00		20 000,00		20 000,00		70 000,00		20 000,00
N/A	Article publication in relevant Media	10 000,00	10,00	100 000,00			1,00	10 000,00	2,00	20 000,00	2,00	20 000,00	2,00	20 000,00	1,00	10 000,00	2,00	20 000,00
N/A	Promotional Material	200,00	900,00	180 000,00			0,00	0,00	600,00	120 000,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	300,00	60 000,00	0,00	0,00
1.7	Miscellaneous			150 000,00				0,00		30 000,00		30 000,00		30 000,00		30 000,00		30 000,00
N/A	Study tours - transport	20 000,00	5,00	100 000,00			0,00	0,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00	1,00	20 000,00
N/A	Study tours - refreshments	10 000,00	5,00	50 000,00			0,00	0,00	1,00	10 000,00	1,00	10 000,00	1,00	10 000,00	1,00	10 000,00	1,00	10 000,00
2	Programme Component 1 (pre-defined project 1)			0,00	85,00%	0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00
2.1	Management costs			0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00
2.2	Swiss experts and partners			0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00
2.3	Activities			0,00				0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00		0,00
3	Open Call 1 - Sustainable tourism			660 000 000,00	85,00%	23 375 000,00		660 000 000,00										
4	Open Call 2 - Enhanced biodiversity			300 000 000,00	85,00%	10 625 000,00		300 000 000,00										
5	Open Call 3 - Small grant scheme			106 000 000,00	85,00%	3 754 166,67		106 000 000,00										
6	Open Call 4				85,00%	0,00												
7	Open Call 5				85,00%	0,00												
8	Open Call 6				85,00%	0,00												
9	Open Call 7				85,00%	0,00												
	TOTAL			1 084 235 294,16	85,00%	38 400 000,00		1 068 861 000,00		3 514 294,16		2 764 000,00		2 472 300,00		4 302 000,00		2 202 000,00

Organizational Chart of the Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic

01/04/24



MONIKA VANĚČKOVÁ

CURRICULUM VITAE

Address:	Jana Želivského 1816/25 130 00 Prague, Czech Republic	Date of Birth:	June 15, 1983
Telephone:	+420 603 468 033	Nationality:	Czech
		E-Mail:	Monika.Vaneckova@mzp.cz

WORK EXPERIENCE

September 2010 - onwards	Ministry of the Environment (MoE) , Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments, Programme and Project Manager – full-time <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long-term experience in the field of project and programmes coordination and methodical project management of EU funds.• Preparation of proposals for national programmes, projects and priorities for the use of EU funds and other foreign resources or aid provided by the Czech Republic abroad, development of binding national rules for the use of EU funds and other foreign resources or aid provided by the Czech Republic abroad, including rules for financial management of projects, evaluation and control.• Evaluation of the progress of the absorption of EU funds for all operational programmes.• Administration of EU programmes, namely LIFE+/LIFE Programme, Swiss- Czech Cooperation Programme, EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme, Interreg: management, controls, monitoring and evaluation of realization of the given programmes.• Methodical and coordination role of use of EU funds.• Administration of Revolving Fund of MoE.• Environmental Expertise Fund under Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme: preparation of calls for proposals, evaluation of project proposals in the field of nature protection and sustainable development, preparation of grant agreements, on-site monitoring.• Project monitoring of large investment projects under Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme.• EEA and Norway Grants 2009-2014: preparation of calls for proposals, evaluation of project proposals in the field of nature protection and sustainable development, preparation of grant agreements, on-site monitoring.• Public advertising of subsidy schemes and call for proposals under the given programmes.• Office administration - ensuring technical assistance for the unit needs.
August 2018 – April 2023	Maternity leave

EDUCATION

October 2005 – June 2010	Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Faculty of Economics and Management Prague, Czech Republic	Study programme: Public administration and regional development. Successfully accomplished with the Engineer's degree
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September 2002 - June 2005	Higher Vocational School of Territorial Administration Kladno, Czech Republic	Study programme: Territorial administration and self-government
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LANGUAGES

Czech	Native
English	Intermediate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B2 degree
German	Intermediate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B1 degree

SOFTWARE SKILLS

Operating Systems	MS Windows
Applications	Advanced user – MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Accessvarious internet and e-mail applications (MS Outlook, LotusNotes etc.) User-level knowledge – MS Access, and other

COURSES AND OTHER EXPERIENCE

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public procurement control • Act No. 218/2000 Coll., on budgetary rules • First level control • Public administration control • Act No 320/2001 Coll. on financial control in public administration • Driver's license - class B (automobiles)

MARKÉTA KONEČNÁ

CURRICULUM VITAE

Address:	Kunčičky u Bašky 79 739 01 Baška, Czech Republic	Date of Birth:	September 5, 1979
		Nationality:	Czech
Telephone:	+420-776-282-054	E-Mail	mkonem@gmail.com

WORK EXPERIENCE

March 2022 - onwards	Ministry of the Environment (MoE) , Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments, Programme and Project Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none">January 2024 onwards: Programme Manager – Second Swiss Contribution (full- time)March 2022 – December 2023 (part-time): administration of IP LIFE COALA, Technical Specialist – responsible for financial and administrative implementation of the project.
April 2017 – February 2022	Maternity leave
August 2016 – March 2017	Šumava National Park Administration , Financial Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none">implementation of environmental projects related to financial matters - control of budgeting when submitting the project application, cooperation in the preparation of financial analysis, control and approval of interim and final disbursement of funds, establishment and completion of accounting documents for individual projects, communication with project partners and the national contact point

March 2009 – July 2016	<p>Ministry of the Environment (MoE), Department of EU Funds, Programme Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administration of EU programmes, namely LIFE+/LIFE Programme, Swiss- Czech Cooperation Programme, EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme, Interreg, Phare/Transition Facility: management, controls, monitoring and evaluation of realization of the given programmes • methodical and coordination role of use of EU funds - national expert on preparation of new regulation of LIFE programme for financial perspective 2014-2020 - preparation and advocacy of national position, participation in EU Council working parties for the Environment according to comitology procedures • head of national contact point for LIFE+/LIFE Programme - consultancy and support to applicants • administration of Revolving Fund of MoE, Environmental Expertise Fund under Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme: preparation of calls for proposals, evaluation of project proposals in the field of nature protection and sustainable development, preparation of grant agreements, on-site monitoring • project monitoring of 2 large investment projects under Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme: Public Transport for All in Beroun and Construction of Tram Rail in Nové Sady, Olomouc • Responsible for national capacity building of LIFE programme: preparing LIFE project proposal, administration of the approved project including fundraising, networking with other national contact points, sharing best practice etc. • public advertising of subsidy schemes and call for proposals under the given programmes • office administration - ensuring technical assistance for the unit needs
January 2008 – February 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a year-off: finalising university studies till June 2008, travelling till January 2009
September 2004 – December 2007	<p>James Cook Languages Praha, English language tutor for commercial as well as private clients of the language school, full-time employment since March 2007</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language tutor for multiple corporate clients including Phillip Morris, Raiffeisen Bank, Česká spořitelna and others • Coaching junior tutors within the language school • August 2007, awarded as the second most valuable teacher of the school
October 2005 – July 2006	<p>REA Kladno, s.r.o., Management Assistant (full-time employment) in a regional consultancy agency in the field of energy and engineering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for administrative agenda of the management • Arranging for translations of various documentation for both internal as well as external usage (translation of marketing materials, proofreading of final reports and participation in internal software localization) • Simultaneous translations during negotiations with business partners • Providing general training to new employees
September 2000 – September 2002	<p>White & Case LLP, law firm, Assistant / receptionist (full-time employment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing various tasks of a receptionist within a major international law firm (including meeting and travel arrangements organization, preparations of meeting and presentation materials) • Providing general administrative support to legal staff of the firm
March 1999 – August 2000	<p>Progress Service s.r.o., Administrative assistant in the local construction company; work mainly consisted of general administrative support such as invoice processing, procurement and payroll administration</p>

EDUCATION

October 2002 – June 2008	Charles University Faculty of Human Studies Prague, Czech Republic	Studies of social sciences; focus on Social and Cultural Ecology. Successfully accomplished with the Bachelor of Arts degree
October 2001 – June 2002	University of Economics Prague, Czech Republic	Faculty of Business and Economics
September 1996 – June 1998	Red Cross Nordic United World College Flekke, Norway	Focus on humanities, successfully accomplished with International Baccalaureate Diploma
September 1994 - June 1996	Moravian Grammar School Brno, Czech Republic	General education; business and economics

LANGUAGES

Czech	Native
English	Fluent <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic State Language Exam (1995)• International Baccalaureate, United World College, Norway (1998)
German	Intermediate

SOFTWARE SKILLS

Operating Systems	MS Windows XP / NT / Me / 2000 / 98
Applications	Advanced user – MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, various internet and e-mail applications (MS Outlook, LotusNotes, Groupwise, etc.) User-level knowledge – MS Access, MSCI and other

WORKSHOPS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

May 1998 – Present day	Membership in the civic society “National Committee of the United World College in the Czech Republic” actively engaged in selections and overall organization of the scholarship programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since 2000, acting as Member of the Executive Committee• 2005 - 2011, Chairman of the Selection Committee
June 2013 and June 2014	TAIEX expert on LIFE programme in Zagreb, Croatia, 2-day presentations in Zagreb for potential applicants and consultations with members of the Croatian Ministry of the Environment on the administration of LIFE programme.
May 2015 and 2016	Welcoming Serbian delegation at the premises of the Ministry of the Environment in Prague presenting the administration of the LIFE Programme at the national level, including the administration structure, competencies, and institutional needs.
Driver's license - class B (automobiles)	

LUCIE VALOVÁ

CURRICULUM VITAE

Address:	Štichova 42, Prague, Czech Republic	Date of Birth:	June 6, 1977
		Nationality:	Czech
Telephone:	+420 608 973 205	E-Mail:	lucie.valova@mzp.cz

WORK EXPERIENCE

2008 – July 2024	Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic , Department of EU Funds - Technical Assistance Coordinator of the Operational Programme Environment and the Operational Programme Just Transition (OPE and OPJT) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Led the comprehensive financial management and administration of technical assistance projects, focusing on operational projects, studies, and analyses in the environmental sector.• Managed the administration of public procurement procedures.• Developed drafts for the Technical Assistance (TA) funding strategy for OPE, and formulated technical assistance methodologies. This included creating and editing the OPE programme document and other key implementation documents.• Collaborated in the preparation of annual budgets for various components of the OPE programme.• Represented the organization in departmental and interdepartmental working groups, ensuring effective communication and coordination across different levels.• Office administration - ensuring technical assistance for the unit needs.
2010 – 2013 and 2016 - 2019	Maternity leave
2005 - 2008	ISES, s.r.o., Praha , Expert Advisor <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided expert advice and services in the fields of waste management and air protection.• Delivered external environmental consultancy for private companies.• Contributed to the development of strategic and professional documents, including waste management plans for regions and cities.
2002 - 2005	Pragochema, s.r.o., Praha , Independent Scientist and Senior Ecologist <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent Researcher: Conducted independent research in the field of foundry and metal surface treatment.• Company Ecologist: Managed waste management, air protection, and water management initiatives. Ensured compliance with ISO 14001 environmental standards.

EDUCATION

1995 – 2002	University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague, Faculty of Environmental technology Prague, Czech Republic	Successfully accomplished with the Engineer's degree
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LANGUAGES

Czech	Native
English	Intermediate
German	Intermediate
Russian	Intermediate

SOFTWARE SKILLS

Operating Systems	MS Windows
Applications	Advanced user – MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Accessvarious internet and e-mail applications (MS Outlook, LotusNotes etc.)

Annex E: Process and Outcomes of the Stakeholder Consultations on February 21, 2024

Regarding the proposed Programme, stakeholder consultations were organized on February 21, 2024, for those who would be affected by the Programme and its implementation. Each pillar was the subject of a half-day seminar. The primary focus was on the content and the Programme mission. The aim of the meetings was to gather feedback and specific, practical recommendations for the proposed Programme. The events were attended by representatives of the National Coordination Unit (Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic) and the donor, and they were simultaneously interpreted into English.

Selection of seminar participants: Information about the upcoming seminars was published in the event calendar on the website of the Ministry of the Environment (both the Czech and English versions) and also on the website of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic. Targeted invitations were then sent to stakeholders who had participated in previous meetings, key players among the beneficiaries, and other entities that expressed interest in information about the proposed Programme. Participation in the seminars was thus open to all entities without restriction, from the public, non-governmental, and private sectors. Sufficient capacity was ensured so that all registered participants could attend the seminars. Among those present were representatives of the administrations of National Parks, Protected Landscape Areas, non-governmental organizations, private entities, representatives of the public or academic sectors, and other associations or organizations focused on environmental protection or tourism.

The seminars included a brief presentation of basic information about the Programme, and the remainder of the seminar was conducted in the form of a discussion among the participating parties on the following topics:

- Specification of Programme objectives
- Czech-Swiss partnership
- Eligible expenses
- Structure of expenditures
- Programme administration - monitoring period, payment structure, etc.

A summary of the suggestions proposed by stakeholders at the meeting on February 21, 2024, including the proposed responses by the Programme Operator, is provided below.

Stakeholders' comments on the morning session on Sustainable Tourism and the proposed way of addressing them by the Programme Operator

I. Issues related to **partnerships in projects:**

1. Stakeholders expressed interest in submitting large projects in broader partnerships of NGOs (consortium of up to 15 NGOs) and the private sector.

- Yes, the involvement of multiple NGOs and private sector partners is possible, but expected for large projects.

This point will be mentioned during consultations with or at information seminars for applicants. It will be also included in the FAQ section to the Call.

2. Question on the involvement of Swiss partner in projects and its impact on the evaluation of projects.

- The involvement of a Swiss partner is a desirable element that will be bonused in the evaluation criteria.

*This point is reflected in the one of the evaluation criteria of the application. **Swiss partnership will be actively encouraged at the project level.** This issue will be mentioned in every consultation with or at information seminars for applicants. It will be also included in the FAQ section to the Call.*

3. Do partners always have to participate financially in projects?

- We assume that a model without financial involvement will be possible, e.g. in the form of an associate partner.

This point will be mentioned during consultations with or at information seminars for applicants. It will be also included in the FAQ section to the Call.

4. Do partners have to be only from the Czech Republic and Switzerland or also from third, e.g. cross-border countries?

- Only Czech or Swiss entities will be eligible as project partners.

This point is reflected in the Call document for applicants. Moreover, this issue will be communicated in every consultation with or at information seminars for applicants. It will be also included in the FAQ section to the Call, and specifically in the Call text.

II. Issues related to the **thematic eligibility** of projects:

1. Will a project be eligible for support that would involve building visitor infrastructure in sites managed by NGOs where sites have been revitalised with other European funds, attractive sites have been created that are worthy of attention but not very accessible - a project to make these new attractive sites accessible?

- Yes, however double-funding must be avoided.

The rules on double-funding will be clearly stated in the Call document for applicants, as well as in the implementation guidelines for beneficiaries.

2. Would a project focusing on rangers with an emphasis on volunteer rangers, visitor communication, visitor monitoring be eligible?

- Yes.

The list of thematic activities for support under the Second Swiss Contribution does not exclude these types of activities for funding.

3. Will a project aimed at monitoring the impacts of landscape fragmentation on populations of sensitive groups of organisms, including monitoring and evaluation of genetic flows be eligible? - This is a good topic for transferring Swiss know-how to the CR, but it would be a more academically oriented project with design of measures and technical solutions, but without implementation of technical solutions - a project without large investments.

- Yes, however, it falls under biodiversity issues.

We do not consider it necessary to address this point in the 2nd stage of SMP. This point will be mentioned during consultations with or at information seminars for applicants. It may be included in the FAQ section to the Call.

4. Would a project on implementation of legislation and transfer of know-how be eligible - practical demonstration of how to live in the foothills in Switzerland, how to deal with the tax burden of biodiversity elements, how farmers work with wild red-listed species in a way that is economically and environmentally sustainable, how to reconcile economic and environmental requirements.

- Yes, but we would classify these types of projects as suitable for SGS.

We do not consider it necessary to address this point in the 2nd stage of SMP.

5. There was mentioned a proposal for an overlapping project that would link National Park administrations, Protected Landscape Areas administrations and destination management organisations and focus on the distribution and natural regulation of tourism in protected areas. Would such an approach be favoured, where many stakeholders were involved in seeking a comprehensive solution?

- Comprehensive projects will be eligible, but not given bonus points.

We do not consider it necessary to address this point in the 2nd stage of SMP.

6. Will a project aimed at educating hotel staff (conveying information about tourist destinations) e.g. in spa towns be eligible if the education is seen as environmental education, linked to the region and introducing visitors to valuable natural sites in the region?

- Rather not, if so, then applied more broadly as a systemic promotion of environmental education for any affected stakeholders, not just hotel staff.

Compared to the previous SMP version 1, the definition of corresponding eligible activities for support under Small Grant Scheme was modified as follows: "Projects increasing the expertise in the field of nature conservation of specific professions such as teachers, corporate ecologists, planners, landscape architects, road and railway managers, police, etc., who can actively influence some of the factors threatening biodiversity in the Czech Republic."

III. Administrative issues

1. It was suggested by stakeholders to extend the monitoring period beyond 6 months. To set its start at any time during the year, e.g. including the possibility for the final beneficiary to set the first monitoring period themselves and then stick to an obligatory fixed schedule.

- This proposal will not be accepted.

This point, in our view, does not need to be addressed under the 2nd stage of SMP.

2. It was suggested by stakeholders to simplify the monitoring report and evidence requirements. Ideally so that the final beneficiary would design their own indicators against which the project would be monitored and tracked, e.g. indicator fulfilment - not tracking all details, not delivering long text reports.

- Yes, we agree with this proposal.

We have addressed this point in the 2nd stage of SMP in the Chapter 4h.

3. When asked by the Programme Operator, stakeholders confirmed that delivery of a cash-flow calendar is desirable especially in case of large projects and ideally after the award of Grant Decision.

- Yes, we agree with this setting.

From our point of view, this point does not need to be addressed in the 2nd stage of SMP.

IV. Issues related to the expenditure eligibility of projects:

1. Will basic tourist infrastructure (e.g. parking, sanitary facilities) be eligible?

- Yes, ideally as part of a systemic project.

We have addressed this point as part of the 2nd stage of SMP.

2. Is there any expectation of limiting potential revenues, profits from projects? E.g. will it be possible to charge for parking or will it have to be free of charge?

- It will depend on the model of state aid applied in the projects:
 - a. the project will be profitable – state aid rules will apply
 - b. charges will cover costs only, in which case they must be monitored in the long term - no state aid will apply.
 - c. parking will be free of charge - no restrictions and no risk of state aid

The issue of the State Aid has been reflected in the Call document, issues regarding profits will also be addressed at information seminars for applicants or in the FAQ section of the Call.

3. There was a proposal not to define specific eligible expenses, but only to specify the non-eligible expenses, assessing their eligibility according to the need in the implementation of the project objectives.

- Yes, we agree with the proposal.

We have addressed this point as part of the 2nd stage of SMP and the Call document in part dedicated to eligible expenditure.

4. There was a suggestion for lump sum reporting of expenses in case of overheads, salaries, etc. Several models used in other subsidy titles (Interreg, OPZ+) were mentioned: overheads as a percentage of investments (overheads must be precisely defined), overhead lump sums for salaries, daily costs -> Another suggestion was to set overheads linked to personal expenses between 8-15% for MGS, overheads of 2-4% for large projects and the possibility to set daily limits for specific objectives (donor visit).

- We would like to further discuss this point at all levels.

We have addressed this point as part of the 2nd stage of SMP and the Call document in part dedicated to eligible expenditure.

5. Will the costs of project preparation or project documentation be eligible? It was suggested that such support should be approved in the form of a lump sum for the preparation of project documentation, and furthermore that consideration should be given to whether the costs of project preparation could be recognised as a co-financing by the applicant.

- This proposal is for consideration. We propose a two-round selection of projects, i.e. applicants will first submit a draft project proposal, those that are successful (projects up to a maximum of 200% of the allocation will be approved) will then submit a full application. Under this approach, we propose that support for the preparation of a full application for the second round of submissions would be eligible.

We would like to discuss this issue when finalising the expenditure eligibility.

6. Will it be possible to assess volunteer work by NGOs in the CR as an eligible expenditure?

- We would like to discuss this point further with the donor. The use of volunteer work is particularly relevant for SGS projects.

We would like to discuss this issue when finalising the expenditure eligibility.

7. Question on specific expenses - fencing, drilled wells, electricity connections, etc. - often this type of expense is not eligible in other programs, will the range of eligible expenses be broader than in most national programs?

- Yes, these costs need to be related to the objectives of the project, they need to be a necessary expense.

This point in our view does not need to be addressed in the 2nd stage of SMP.

Stakeholders' comments on the afternoon session on Biodiversity and the proposed way of addressing them by the Programme Operator

I. Issues related to the thematic eligibility of projects:

1. Inclusion of invasive species among supported topics, both under the small-grant scheme (SGS) and large projects.

- We agree with the proposal. Under SGS, this could be a stand-alone project, in large projects, it should be a companion activity.

This point in our view does not need to be addressed in the 2nd stage of SMP.

2. There is a critical lack of capacity to prepare and implement projects in the mainstream landscape. The technical and personnel capacities for NGOs need to be strengthened. There are efforts to create a comprehensive project aiming at the preparation of personnel and technical capacities that would allow to finance implementation of various projects especially in regard to fulfilment of the new EU law on nature restoration.

- We take note of this comment, but in our opinion, it is not relevant to be addressed in relation to the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme. We are convinced that capacity building issues need to be resolved from national sources or subsidies.

This point, in our view, does not need to be addressed under the 2nd stage of the SMP.

3. There was a request whether the list of groups of endangered animals to be targeted by the projects could be expanded or further specified.

- Yes, the text will be expanded and better specified giving more examples, and informing the applicants respectively during the information seminars and at FAQ section.

We have addressed this point in the 2nd stage of SMP party by giving definition of the Red list species.

4. Is it possible to include applied research on endangered species in the eligible project types?

- Yes, we perceive this as a possible project submitted under the SGS.

We have addressed this point in the 2nd stage of SMP.

5. Houses of Nature - there was a concern expressed about their low contribution to sustainable tourism and biodiversity, and risk perceived that their support would only mean reconstruction of old houses.

- We take note of this comment. The evaluation will explore the benefits and other use of such investments, as well as the experience of the partner group, its track record and previous activities.

We addressed this point while finalising the 2nd stage of SMP. (Re)Construction of similar building in projects must prove positive benefits on environmental problem defined by the Programme.

6. Will a project, that will be costly but not necessarily an investment project, have a chance to succeed at the evaluation, what is the view of the MoE and Nature Conservation Agency being involved in possible cooperation e.g. in designing a comprehensive solution in the field of landscape fragmentation?

- Yes, even a large non-investment project will have a chance to succeed, we do not recommend the MoE as a project partner.

7. For SGS, there is a large diversity of activities proposed, e.g. awareness events, festivals.... - which can cause an overload of the call.

- We will reconsider including the awareness events and festivals in the supported topics.

We have modified the formulation of supported themes regarding the awareness events in the 2nd SMP version.

II. Issues related to the **expenditure eligibility** of projects:

1. A request was made to make fencing, watering holes, bore wells etc. part of eligible expenditure.

➤ Yes, accepted, ideally as part of a large complex project.

We have addressed this point when defining the eligibility rules for expenditure.

2. Will special software be developed for filling-in the application?

➤ No such specific software will not be created.

From our point of view, this point does not need to be addressed in the 2nd stage of SMP.

3. Could there be a possibility for applicants to be invited by evaluators to give additional information on ambiguous/insufficient explanations provided in their application during the assessment of their proposal? (as in case of the Interreg programme)?

➤ No, there couldn't.

The evaluation process described in the 2nd SMP version does not presume such possibility.

4. Is it possible to implement projects across protected areas and, at the same time, in open landscape?

➤ Yes, it is.

This point will be addressed during information sessions with applicants and in the FAQ section.

5. Which sources will not be eligible for projects co-financing?

➤ The European funds, in particular.

We do not consider it necessary to address this point within the 2nd stage of SMP.

6. A proposal was made to increase the financial limit for SGS projects – here we are facing the question of supporting more small projects versus fewer larger projects.

➤ This is a question for further discussion.

We have discussed this issue both internally as well as with the donor party and decided not to change the presented limits in the 1st SMP version.

7. Is it possible to increase the allocation for SGS?

➤ This is a question for further discussion.

We have discussed this issue both internally as well as with the donor party and decided not to change the presented limits in the 1st SMP version.

8. A suggestion was made not to limit expenditure categories due to large diversity of project types.

➤ Yes, we agree with the suggestion.

We have reflected this comment when defining the eligibility criteria for expenditure.

9. The SGS is more inclined towards a larger number of smaller projects; in the case of the Houses of Nature, would it not be more appropriate to focus on supporting the content side and their operation rather than exhausting the funds on pure construction as such?

➤ The ideal project should combine both, the renovation/acquisition of such a facility and the provision of its operation including awareness programmes.

More emphasis was placed on the effect of re(construction) of buildings within the Programme.

10. What should be the sustainability of project outputs?

- We suggest mandatory sustainability over 2-3 years, further sustainability commitment shall be set by the applicant, this aspect shall be bonified accordingly during the evaluation.

We have addressed this point in the 2nd stage of SMP and increased the obligatory sustainability to 5 years in case of large projects and 3 years in case of SGS projects.

11. Ex ante payments max. 50%, last payment min. 10%

- Yes, we agree with the proposal.

We have addressed this issue in the 2nd SMP version and reflected it also in the Tentative Disbursement Plan.



Call for Applications for Support from „Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity Programme“ funded under the Second Swiss Contribution

The Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic

announces a **call** for applications for support **on dd. mm. 2024**

for the **implementation of projects** in the pillar of **Biodiversity Enhancement**

or the pillar of **Sustainable Tourism**.

Preamble

The call is addressed to applicants applying for support from the "Sustainable Tourism and Biodiversity Enhancement Programme" funded by the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme under the Second Swiss Contribution for the implementation of projects in the field of Environmental Protection and Climate Change. The call is published on the website of the Ministry of the Environment www.mzp.cz.

Applicants who are in the position of the main applicant can apply for support for the **implementation** of their project. Support can be requested for projects that will be implemented in the territory of the Czech Republic, with the exception of the capital city of Prague.

The call for applications outlines the conditions for awarding grant, as well as the process of submitting and assessing applications.

The Second Swiss Contribution

The Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme is implemented based on the ***Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Czech Republic regarding the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to selected EU member states to reduce economic and social disparities within the EU***, signed on June 29, 2023. The conclusion of the Framework Agreement allows the Czech Republic to receive financial resources from the Second Swiss Contribution within the so-called cohesion allocation amounting to CHF 76.9 million (approximately CZK 1.845 billion), of which CHF 38.4 million (approximately CZK 921.6 million) was allocated to the field of Environmental Protection and Climate.

The basic framework of the "Sustainable Tourism and Biodiversity Enhancement" programme (hereinafter referred to as the "Programme"), including its thematic areas of support, financial



allocation, duration, objectives, and specific implementation conditions, is defined by the ***Specific Framework for the Implementation of the Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Czech Republic regarding 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 June 1, 2023..

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

I. Introductory Provisions and Terms of the Call

1. Basis

The general aim of the Programme is to address two main causes of biodiversity decline, particularly human interference with ecosystems (e.g., landscape fragmentation) and overexploitation of ecosystems (e.g., excessive tourism). Through the Programme, a reduction in pressure on ecosystem functions and services in the landscape, especially in valuable natural sites, shall be achieved.

In terms of structure, the Programme is divided into two main pillars:

- a) Biodiversity Enhancement
- b) Sustainable Tourism

2. Total Allocation

Within this call, financial support (hereinafter referred to as “support”) can be requested to **co-finance eligible project expenditures** approved under one of the Programme pillars.

The allocation for this call is as follows:

- a) CZK 300 million under the Biodiversity Enhancement pillar,
- b) CZK 660 million under the Sustainable Tourism pillar.

A project may only be submitted under one of the above-mentioned pillars. The number of projects submitted by a main applicant is not limited.



3. Amount of support

- Support will be allocated based on the assessment result of the project concept and subsequently the full application within this call.
- The minimum total eligible budget for one project is CZK 70 million.
- The maximum amount of support for one project equals the total allocation of the respective pillar under this call.
- The amount of support granted under this call is a **maximum of 90% of the final eligible project expenditures**. The maximum rate of support may be adjusted in accordance with the rules of State aid.
- The final amount of support will be determined by the Grant Award Decision, or a similar legal act (hereinafter also referred to as "Decision"). If a beneficiary carries out activities that exceed the specified amount, they are obliged to secure these additional expenses from their own resources.
- The disbursed amount will depend on the actual utilization of the budget approved by the grant provider and the final amount of support granted to the beneficiary.
- Support will generally be provided in a combination of ex-ante and ex-post payments.

4. Eligible Applicants

An eligible applicant is any **legal entity** based in the territory of the Czech Republic, with legal personality and an organization identification number. The eligible person who can apply for support is considered to be the main applicant of the proposed project, responsible for implementing eligible activities for support

The project proposals can be submitted by an individual entity or in a partnership consortium. The project partner can be a Czech or Swiss entity with legal personality in the Czech Republic or the Swiss Confederation. Partnership agreement must be concluded between the main applicant and other project partners.

5. Thematic Focus and Eligible Activities

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

Framework definition for project proposals and eligible activities:

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



1. 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.).
2. 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.)

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

1. 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.
2. 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 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. will be supported. The 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 system changes in the management of visitor flows to selected natural sites considering the natural assets and ecosystem services in these sites.



Framework definition for project proposals and eligible activities:

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

1. 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.
2. 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

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

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

C. Awareness-raising and education measures influencing visitors' impact on natural ecosystems.

1. Building or renovating visitor/information centres and houses of nature.
2. 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.
3. Support for educational programmes of "locally anchored learning".
4. Solutions to 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 valuable sites, particularly with regard to the extreme pressure on ecosystems due to excessive tourism will be supported. These projects aim primarily at distributing 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 demonstration approaches and offering comprehensive solutions in co-operation 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, considering the predominant focus of the project objectives.

The call will not support entrepreneurial activities

6. Eligibility of Project Expenses

An expense is generally considered eligible if it meets all of the following conditions:

1. It complies with the principles of purposefulness, efficiency, and economy according to Act No. 320/2001 Coll., on Financial Control in Public Administration and on Amendments to some Acts, as amended (the Financial Control Act), and Act No. 218/2000 Coll., on Budgetary Rules and on Amendments to some related Acts, as amended;
2. It was incurred in accordance with the conditions of this call;
3. It is necessary for the implementation of the project, directly related to the implementation of its activities, and aimed at achieving the project's objectives;
4. It was incurred and paid by the beneficiary within the specified period for the project implementation stated in the Grant Award Decision;
5. It was actually incurred, recorded in the beneficiary's accounting records, identifiable and verifiable, supported by original documents in accordance with Act No. 563/1991 Coll., on Accounting, as amended.

When financing the project, a flat rate of up to 10% of the total eligible project expenses directly related to individual activities will be used for flat expenses.

The following expenses can be financed from the project's flat expenses: overhead, operational, and other costs (rent, energy, heating, water and sewage, hardware and software for project management purposes, telecommunications services, internet connection, office supplies, data storage media, consumables), insurance, delivery and postal services, organizational support for work meetings, promotional items, training and education, vehicle operation expenses, travel expenses, travel allowances, fuel, domestic and international travel.

Flat expenses determined using the flat rate do not need to be substantiated with tax, accounting, or other documents. Expenses financed using the flat rate cannot be included among the direct expenses of the project.

Value-added tax related to eligible expenses is an eligible expense if the beneficiary is not a taxpayer of this tax or if they are not entitled to a tax deduction.



Ineligible expenses are:

- Expenses that were not listed and approved in the final project proposal,
- Expenses that were not incurred in accordance with the project's goals and activities,
- Expenses that did not occur within the project implementation period specified in the Grant Award Decision,
- Expenses incurred outside the territory of the Czech Republic and the Swiss Confederation,
- Expenses that are not documented with the appropriate accounting records,
- Fines, financial penalties, and legal expenses related to legal disputes,
- Value-added tax with the right to tax deduction,
- Other tax expenses and administrative fees,
- Loan interest,
- Exchange rate losses,
- Land purchases.

7. Sustainability

Sustainability is the period during which the beneficiary must maintain the purpose, goals, and outputs of the project. The project's sustainability will be given in the project description and must be set for a minimum of 5 years. The information on project sustainability will be submitted as part of the project's monitoring reports.

8. State Aid

State aid - basic conditions

Where a project proposal contains several measures, some of which could be financed outside the State aid scheme at the same time as a measure covered by State aid, the entire project will be financed under the relevant public aid scheme.

Projects carried out by public sector applicants, which are of a non-business nature (non-economic activity) conducted on their own land, do not constitute State aid.

State-owned enterprises must be treated as standard enterprises, and therefore, the rules on State aid must be applied in situations where the subsidy is directed towards their economic activity.

Non-profit organizations must be evaluated based on the activities they actually carry out; their legal form is not decisive.

Support under this call for proposals may be granted only in accordance with the rules governing State aid, in particular:



- block exemptions under Articles 45 and 53 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in accordance with Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (General Block Exemption Regulation - GBER), or
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 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 (de minimis aid).

Each applicant and their project are assessed individually in terms of State aid rules. In special cases, we recommend consulting with the grant provider.

9. Questions and Consultations

Questions and consultations can be:

- made verbally at the phone numbers
- sent via email to

Questions may be submitted no earlier than the day the open call is announced and no later than 5 working days before the final deadline for application submission. The response will be sent to the applicant within 5 working days, but no later than the closing date of the call. It is possible to schedule a personal consultation by phone or email at the above-mentioned contact details.

Frequently asked questions and answers related to the call will be published on the website

Programme documents are publicly available and can be downloaded from:

- the website of the Ministry of the Environment:
- the website of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic:

10. Call Annexes

- Annex No. 1: Grant Application Form
- Annex No.2: Concept Project Proposal Form

II. Course of the Call

1. Requirements for the Application Form and its Content



The call consists of **two** rounds. In the first round of the call, the applicant submits a concept project proposal along with the grant application. If the applicant advances with their project to the second round of the call, they submit a full project proposal.

First round of the call

The **grant application** along with the concept project proposal, in Word and PDF formats, signed by the statutory body of the applicant or their authorized representative, must be submitted **no later than** [insert deadline] **via data box**. The identifier of the Ministry of the Environment's data box is: **9gsaax4**.

The application submitted via the data box will include electronic attachments:

1. Completed grant application form (Annex No. 1 of this call). The document must be signed by an authorized person with a valid electronic signature in accordance with Act No. 297/2016 Coll., on electronic signatures;
2. Completed concept project proposal (Annex No. 2), **in Word and PDF formats**.

Second round of the call

The **full project proposal** must be submitted via data box with the relevant signatures of the authorized person, similarly to the procedure outlined for the first round, no later than [insert deadline].

The full project proposal will be completed using the concept project proposal form (Annex No. 2), in **Word and PDF formats**.

Both rounds of the call

The subject of the data message must state: "**CALL FOR SWISS-CZECH COOPERATION PROGRAM – DO NOT OPEN BEFORE EVALUATION**".

In case of incorrect subject of the message, the provider is not responsible for the non-delivery of the message to the Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments of the Ministry of the Environment (hereinafter referred to as "Department").

The application must be sent via the data box system on the deadline day for receiving applications, by 23:59:59 CET.

2. Information for Application Processing

- The application for support is processed in the Czech language.
- Expenses in the grant application as well as in all project documents will be stated in Czech Crowns



- The concept must contain at least the following information: project title, applicant's name, proposed partnership structure, project objective, description of proposed activities and outputs, proposed indicators, and basic project budget. More detailed information is provided in the concept project proposal form.
- Further information can be obtained at the website of the Ministry of the Environment ... and also through direct inquiry to the Department of Financial and Voluntary Instruments (320) of the Ministry of the Environment via the helpdesk: ...

3. Selection Process of Submitted Applications

First round assessment

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

1. Assessment of the formal correctness and completeness of the application and project concept, as well as evaluation of acceptability

The assessment of the application and project concept regarding completeness, formal correctness, and acceptability will be conducted by the Department's staff based on a checklist.

The following aspects will be subject to review:

- Properly labelled subject of the data message;
- Documents signed by an authorized representative where required;
- Authorizations where relevant;
- Mandatory attachments in electronic format.

If the Department's staff identifies deficiencies in the submitted application and/or project concept regarding completeness and formal correctness, they will request the applicant to rectify or supplement the application. The applicant will have the opportunity to address these deficiencies within a specified period, typically at least five working days from the request for supplementation sent to the contact email provided in the grant application

Following the assessment of formal requirements, the Department's staff will conduct an acceptability check on the applications and project concepts. This check will focus on ensuring that the applications meet the eligibility criteria specified in the call.

If grant applications fail to meet the criteria for formal correctness and completeness, or the criterion of acceptability within the specified period, even after supplementation, the procedure will be terminated by a resolution. The concerned applicants will be informed of this decision through a letter sent via data mailbox.



2. Expert Assessment

If the application, along with the project concept, is formally complete and deemed acceptable based on meeting the conditions for acceptance, the application is accepted. An accepted application is then advanced to an expert assessment.

The project concept will be assessed by at least two expert evaluators. At least one expert assessment will be conducted independently of assessments by departmental organisations or technical departments of the Ministry of the Environment. Each expert evaluator must have previous experience in project assessment and demonstrate their professional competence by providing a professional resume. The list of nominated expert evaluators will be approved by the Director-General of the Section of Environmental Economics of the Ministry of the Environment

The expert assessment will be carried out using a points-based scoring scale and assessment criteria published in the call. The result of the assessment will be the arithmetic average of both expert evaluations. Each project application can receive a maximum of 100 points. Project applications with a final score of 50 points or more (arithmetic average) will be referred to the Evaluation Committee for further consideration. In the case of a difference in scoring between the two evaluators greater than 30 points, the project will be referred to the Evaluation Committee for further assessment.

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

Subsequently, the assessed applications will be submitted to the Evaluation Committee for further consideration.

3. Evaluation Committee Assessment

The composition of the Evaluation Committee and its members will be confirmed by the Director-General of the Section of Environmental Economics of the Ministry of the Environment.

The Evaluation Committee will review the submitted projects in the order of the final scores obtained in the expert assessments and will review the expert opinions of the evaluators. It may adjust individual project scores, for example in cases such as:

- Scores of expert assessments of one expert evaluator are unreasonably harsh/soft in all cases of his/her assessment. In such a case, all scores of that evaluator will be changed.
- An expert assessment of a project proposal is not clearly in line with assessment criteria.



Should the Evaluation Committee change the assessment of a project(s), it must give clear and detailed reasons for its decision. This change will always be justified in the minutes of the Evaluation Committee meeting. The Evaluation Committee shall decide on the change by resolution.

The Evaluation Committee will review the conditions proposed by the expert evaluators. It may set specific conditions for each project that the applicant must fulfil to receive support.

Based on its assessment, the Committee will rank the projects and decide which ones advance to the second round. Ideally, the total eligible expenditure of these projects should be 200% of the allocation for each pillar in this call.

The Evaluation Committee may also reallocate funds between pillars if one of the pillars does not receive enough high-quality projects, resulting in unspent funds allocated for the given pillar.

4. Steering Committee

The results of the first-round selection process, including the list of projects that are to advance to the second round and those that are not, will be submitted to the members of the Steering Committee (hereinafter referred to as "SC") for their information.

5. Notification of the first-round results

Applicants will be informed of the first round assessment results in writing via a letter sent through the data mailbox. Applicants whose projects have advanced to the second round will be informed of the conditions they must meet in order to receive support.

Second round assessment

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 of the result of the first-round assessment to the closing date for submission of full project proposals.

1. Assessment of the formal correctness and completeness of the full project proposal

The assessment of the full project proposal regarding completeness and formal correctness, will be conducted by the Department's staff based on a checklist.

The following aspects will be subject to review:

- Properly labelled subject of the data message;
- Documents signed by an authorized representative where required;
- Authorizations where relevant;
- Mandatory attachments in electronic format.



If the Department's staff identifies deficiencies in the submitted full project proposal regarding completeness and formal correctness, they will request the applicant to rectify or supplement the proposal. The applicant will have the opportunity to address these deficiencies within a specified period, typically at least five working days from the request for supplementation sent to the contact email provided in the grant application.

If grant applications fail to meet the criteria for formal correctness and completeness, or the criterion of acceptability within the specified period, even after supplementation, the procedure will be terminated by a resolution. The concerned applicants will be informed of this decision through a letter sent via data mailbox.

2. Expert assessment

If the full project proposal is formally complete and deemed acceptable based on meeting the conditions for acceptance, the application is accepted. An accepted full project proposal is then advanced to expert assessment.

The full project proposal will be assessed by at least two expert evaluators, similar to the first round. Based on the same procedure, the arithmetic mean of the expert assessments will also be obtained, according to which the projects are ranked for further discussion by the Evaluation Committee. At this stage, the expert evaluators primarily assess whether the project's objectives can be achieved according to the complete description of each activity, with the expected quality of outputs, within the specified deadlines, and within the anticipated financial resources. Additionally, compliance with the conditions set by the Evaluation Committee in the first round of assessment is also assessed.

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

Subsequently, **all** assessed full project proposals will be submitted to the Evaluation Committee for further discussion.

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3. Evaluation Committee assessment

Representatives of the Swiss Coordination Office and the National Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic may take part in the Evaluation Committee meeting as observers.

The Evaluation Committee will discuss all assessed full project proposals. Based on its assessment, the Evaluation Committee will decide on the ranking of projects and compile 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 assessment of the application and will examine the expert assessments provided



by the evaluators. It may adjust individual project scores in justified cases, for example such as:

- Scores of expert assessment of one expert evaluator are unreasonably harsh/soft in all cases of his/her assessment. In such a case, all scores of that evaluator will be changed.
- An expert assessment of a full proposal is clearly not in line with assessment criteria.

Should the Evaluation Committee change the assessment of a project(s), it must give clear and detailed reasons for its decision. This change will always be justified in the minutes of the Evaluation Committee meeting. The Evaluation Committee shall decide on the change by resolution.

The Evaluation Committee will review the conditions proposed by the expert evaluators. It may set specific conditions for each project that the applicant must fulfil to receive support. These are always conditions that can ideally be met based on the decision of a public entity (e.g., a valid building permit).

Based on the expert assessment results and its own assessment, the Committee compile a list of projects recommended for support, recommended for support with conditions or grant reduction, recommended as reserve projects, and those not recommended for support. This list of projects will be submitted to the members of the Steering Committee.

4. Steering Committee

The members of the Steering Committee with decision-making authority are representatives from 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 will discuss the proposal of recommended projects and decide on the approved and reserve projects within both pillars of the Programme. If the Steering Committee expresses reservations about certain projects, it may decide to set additional conditions for the provision of financial support. The Steering Committee also has the right, based on proper justification, to reject funding for specific projects. The conclusion of the discussion of the recommended projects will be recorded in the minutes of the Steering Committee meeting.

5. Notification of the second-round results

Applicants are informed in writing about the results of the assessment of the full project proposals in the second round via a letter sent through the data mailbox.

Supported projects that either have no conditions set, or have met the conditions, can subsequently apply for the Grant Award Decision. For other supported projects that are not yet fully prepared for implementation, the Committee will set a deadline for meeting the specified conditions, which must not exceed 12 months. If these conditions are not met, the reserve projects, in the established order, will be invited to submit the necessary documents for the Grant Award Decision or provide confirmation of meeting the specified conditions.



4. Assessment Criteria

Project concepts as well as full project proposals will be assessed according to the following criteria, which are further detailed in the Concept Project Proposal Form. The form is an integral part of the documentation for this call, provided as Annex No. 2 (Concept Project Proposal). The maximum number of points that can be allocated to a project is 100 points. The detailed allocation of points among individual criteria is specified in the Concept Project Proposal Form.

Assessment criteria:

- *Relevance – 10 points in total*
 - Environmental problem addressed by the project
 - Compliance of project objectives with environmental legislation, strategic documents and the Programme
- *Impact – 35 points in total*
 - Objectives and Impacts
 - Sustainability
- *Implementation – 30 points in total*
 - Description of Project Implementation (planned work packages)
 - Stakeholders and Target Groups
- *Resources – 25 points in total*
 - Swiss Partner in a project
 - Partnership Structure and Project Management
 - Risk Analysis
 - Project Budget

5. Grant Award Decision

The decision on awarding the grant (or partial grant, or rejecting the grant), or legal act on the allocation of support is issued by the Director-General of the Section of Environmental Economics. By signing the Grant Award Decision, the final amount of support is determined. 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 Decision. The Decision will include, among other things, instructions for submitting the final report, conditions for reporting, and the payment schedule. The applicant may submit reasoned objections to the Decision through the Department within 15 days of receiving the Decision and only in writing via a data box. There is no legal entitlement to grant approval.



6. Call Schedule

- Call announcement: **dd. mm. 2024**
- Deadline for submission of applications (along with project concepts): **dd. mm. 2024**
- Expected date for announcement of results from the first round of evaluation:
dd. mm. 2025
- Expected deadline for the final date of submission of complete applications within the second round of evaluation: **dd. mm. 2025**
- Expected possible start date of project implementation: **dd. mm. 2025**
- Expected latest end date for completion of project implementation: **31. 12. 2028**

ANNEX G - ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR EXPERT ASSESSMENT

1. RELEVANCE – 10 points in total
<p>1.1 Environmental problem addressed by the project</p> <p><i>The applicant gives a clear description of the environmental problem addressed by their project and defines its main causes. The applicant describes the baseline situation including measurable figures. The applicant defines the project's territorial scope and the territorial level at which it is addressed.</i></p> <p><i>The applicant explains the necessity of the project in terms of its expected contribution for the environment and climate.</i></p>
<p>1.2 Compliance of project objectives with environmental legislation, strategic documents and the Programme</p> <p><i>The applicant describes the national environmental and climate legislation and policies to which the environmental problem is linked and how its solution will contribute to the objectives of the programme.</i></p> <p><i>The applicant names any relevant national strategic and legislative documents (strategies, plans, frameworks etc.) connected to the project's objectives and describes how they relate to each other, providing the evidence with a link to specific text (chapter, paragraph etc.) in the documents.</i></p>
2. IMPACT – 35 points in total
<p>2.1 Objectives and impacts</p> <p><i>What is the objective of the project and how is it related to the environmental problem targeted?</i></p> <p><i>The applicant describes the main objectives of the project and proposes relevant indicators for measuring the progress in reaching them.</i></p> <p><i>The applicant identifies, describes and quantifies main impacts of the project expected at the end of the project implementation in relation to the environmental problem(s), (as described in 1.1 above, in comparison to the baseline. The applicant gives specific information on impacts solely related to their project.</i></p> <p><i>The applicant shall explicitly state to which of the programme outcomes its project is linked and justify this link.</i></p>
<p>2.2 Sustainability</p> <p><i>The applicant describes the project sustainability after the end of the project implementation and gives clear answers to the following questions:</i></p> <p><i>How will the project impact (environmental, social and economic) be ensured and sustained? Which tasks will the applicant carry out during the project to ensure that? Which parts of the project should be continued or maintained? How will this be achieved and which resources (namely personnel, financial, technical and others) will be necessary? How will the necessary financial and personnel capacities be ensured?</i></p>

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3. IMPLEMENTATION - 30 points in total

3.1 Description of project implementation

*The applicant gives a brief description of the **main project implementation actions** (how, where, when and who) and their results including indicators for their verification. The applicant clarifies the link between the actions and objectives targeted. The applicant characterizes the activities related to communication, spreading awareness of the project and its results among different target groups.*

All outputs of project actions are listed.

The applicant describes the time aspect of the project implementation. The project activities must be clear, realistic (feasible within the project timeframe with the proposed budget and resources) and interlinked with the environmental problem and its causes, objectives and outcomes.

3.2. Stakeholders and target groups

*The applicant defines **key stakeholders** that may have an influence on the project implementation and its results and that may benefit from the project outcomes.*

*The applicant names main **target groups** that may benefit from the project and adds information on other participants' involvement in the project (active/ passive).*

The applicant names all stakeholders from other Czech Republic and Switzerland involved in the project and provides declarations of their interest in the project implementation.

4. RESOURCES - 25 points in total

4.1 The Swiss-Czech Partnership

Swiss partner in the project – *the applicant describes the meaningful involvement of the Swiss partner, in particular:*

The specific objective(s) the partner is responsible for and a justification/description of their experience in the field. A list of activities and outputs which the partner is responsible for or involved in. A description of how, where and when the applicant implements the activities concerned, with what budget and which results.

4.2 Partnership structure and project management

The applicant describes proposed management structure of their project – gives brief information on project partners and their relevance to implementation of specific measures. The applicant describes their experience with management of similar projects including financial management. The applicant describes their implementation team.

The project consortium is appropriately composed of those entities that can contribute to solving the environmental problem. It is well described what activities each partner is engaged in and why.

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The need for the applicant to participate in the project is justified in detail. The involvement of the partner in the project is meaningful, its role is active and important for the achievement of the project objectives.

4.3 Risk analysis

The applicant describes critical risks, uncertainties or difficulties related to the project implementation and their measures / strategy for addressing them.

The applicant indicates for each risk (in the description) the impact and the likelihood that the risk will materialise (high, medium, low), even after considering the mitigating measures.

The applicant describes any barriers / obstacles, including legislative regulations and standards that may be a risk for achieving the project's objectives / impacts. .

4.4 Project budget

The applicant describes the main cost categories and well justifies individual costs arising from the project implementation. The costs must be sufficiently described, necessary for the project implementation and adequate to the value received. The budget and resources must be appropriate and consistent with the work plan.