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NEXT Poland – Ukraine

**Annex 9
to the Manual for small projects**

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF SELECTION AND WORK OF EXPERTS FOR THE SMALL PROJECTS FUND IMPLEMENTED UNDER THE INTERREG NEXT POLAND – UKRAINE 2021-2027 PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

The Small Projects Fund Committee of the Interreg NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme (hereinafter "the Committee") acting on the basis of:

Rules of Procedure of the Small Project Fund Committee of the Interreg NEXT Poland - Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme

Appoints a Team of experts (comprising all experts evaluating projects in a given call for proposals) to carry out a qualitative assessment of applications for small projects submitted under the Small Project Fund (hereinafter "SPF") of the Interreg NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme

§ 1

Selection of experts

1. An expert is a person with specialist knowledge and experience in a given field (listed below) who makes a qualitative assessment of small projects that have passed the formal assessment stage in a given call for proposals.
2. The call for Polish and Ukrainian experts carrying out the qualitative assessment of applications for small projects is organised by the SPF Beneficiary. The call announcement shall be published i.a. on the SPF Beneficiaries', website and social media or in the media.
3. A person who meets the following general conditions may apply to be an expert:
 - a) has made a declaration under penalty of perjury:
 - on the exercise of full public rights,
 - to have full legal capacity,
 - confirming that he or she has not been convicted of an intentional crime or an intentional fiscal offence by a judgment which has the force of *res judicata*,
 - b) is not employed by the SPF Beneficiary,
 - c) has knowledge of issues and regulations concerning the use of European Union assistance funds, including in particular the Interreg NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme (knowledge of the *Interreg NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme* and *the Manual for small projects in the Interreg NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme*, including: description of measures eligible for funding under priority 4, rules for eligibility of expenditure, issues related to the implementation of partnership projects, features of a cross-border project, project selection criteria),
 - d) has experience in the preparation and/or implementation and/or evaluation of projects financed by European funds,
 - e) has knowledge and experience in the field covered by the SPF,
 - f) agrees to the inclusion of personal data in the list of expert candidates and to the processing of personal data disclosed by the expert candidate in the process of establishing and maintaining the list of expert candidates, as well as for the purposes of participating in the project selection process.
4. The candidate expert shall submit the required documents proving the fulfilment of the aforementioned conditions by the date and in the manner indicated by the SPF Beneficiary in the announcement.
5. The SPF Beneficiary verifies the documents submitted by the candidates, draws up a list of expert candidates meeting the requirements and submits it to the Small Projects Fund Committee for approval.
6. The Small Project Fund Committee appoints experts from among the candidates proposed by the SPF Beneficiary and approves any changes in the list of experts.
7. The Small Project Fund Committee shall decide to remove an expert from the list of experts in the event of one or more of the following circumstances:
 - a) a negative evaluation of the work carried out by the expert,
 - b) the expert ceases to fulfil one of the prerequisites referred to above,
 - c) submission of untruthful documents by the expert,

- d) a written request by the expert to be removed from the list.
- e) death of an expert

The SPF Beneficiary shall immediately notify the relevant expert of his/her removal from the list of experts.

§ 2

Principles of expert work

1. The basic rules for the work of experts evaluating applications for small projects under the Small Project Fund are defined in this document.
2. The SPF Beneficiary is responsible for training the experts in time and to the extent necessary to ensure an efficient evaluation process for small projects.
3. The SPF Beneficiary monitors the quality of the work performed by the expert.
4. The detailed terms and conditions of the expert's work will be set out in a contract concluded between the expert and the SPF Beneficiary.

§ 3

Quality assessment process

1. The qualitative assessment is carried out by independent experts from the Polish-Ukrainian Team of experts, appointed by the Small Project Fund Committee. Each project is assessed independently by two experts (1 PL and 1 UA).
2. The SPF Beneficiary appoints the Chairman of the Team of experts, who is fully responsible for the formal and procedural correctness of the qualitative assessment of small projects. The Chairperson does not evaluate small projects, his/her task is:
 - a) preparation of assessment documents:
 - declarations of confidentiality and impartiality for experts,
 - evaluation attendance lists,
 - assessment sheets,
 - assessment summaries,
 - assessment protocol.
 - b) Assignment to experts of projects to be evaluated by drawing lots.
 - c) Overseeing the work Team of Experts on:
 - compliance with the established procedures and criteria for assessing applications,
 - ensure that any recommendations for the project are unambiguous and consistent,
 - ensure the impartiality and transparency of the work of the Team of experts.
3. Proposals are allocated to individual experts by means of a draw, which takes place before the evaluation. The draw is carried out by the Chairman of the Team of experts.

Before starting the draw, experts evaluating applications in a given call for proposals receive a list of projects subject to qualitative assessment containing: name and address of the applicant, partners, title of the project, name and surname of the person representing the applicant/partner and the contact person. After the analysis of the list of submitted applications, in case of a conflict of interest, the experts report this fact to the Chairman of the Team of Experts. If in the pool of proposals submitted to a given expert, there is a project with regard to which the expert reported a conflict of interest, this project is allocated by drawing lots to the next expert.

4. The grant applications and their annexes are forwarded to the experts by the SPF Beneficiary in electronic form.
5. Before starting the evaluation of the projects, each expert and the chairperson shall sign a *Declaration of impartiality and confidentiality*.
6. On receipt of a proposal, the expert makes an independent assessment by completing an quality assessment sheet in accordance with the approved assessment criteria. The assessment shall include the number of points awarded and a justification for each criterion, as well as, where necessary, recommendations for the revision of the application. The expert is also required to summarise the overall assessment of the small project.
7. The completed project assessment sheets are forwarded to the SPF Beneficiary in both electronic and paper form, who archives them.
8. The Chairperson shall review the evaluation results provided by the experts in order to examine whether the assessment made by the expert is in accordance with *the Manual for small projects* and these *Regulations*.
9. If the difference in the experts' assessment is greater than 15 points, a joint assessment is agreed during the discussion at the panel of experts. If it is not possible to agree on a common position, the SPF Beneficiary appoints an additional expert, who carries out his/her assessment of the project independently of the previous assessment. Also in case the project receives one negative and one positive assessment result, a third expert is also appointed. In the described situations, the final project assessment is the arithmetic mean of the assessments of all three experts.
10. The necessity to convene a panel of experts (either on-site or online) to discuss and agree on the results of the expert assessment is decided by the SPF Beneficiary. The meetings of the panel of experts are not open to the public. Possible costs of organising the panel of experts meetings are covered by the SPF Beneficiary. Arrangements for the possible costs of experts' participation in the panel of experts meetings (e.g. travel costs, accommodation, per diems) are included in the contract concluded between the SPF Beneficiary and the expert.
11. In justified cases, the expert is obliged to provide the Small Project Committee with additional explanations in writing or to attend a meeting of the Committee to approve the projects assessed by the expert in question.

§ 4

Official languages

1. The official language of the work of the Team of experts is English.

§ 5

Approval of the Rules of Procedure and amendments thereto

1. *The Rules of Procedure* are annexed to the *Manual for small project in the Interreg NEXT Poland - Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme*, which is approved by the Managing Authority of the Interreg NEXT Poland - Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme.
2. Any amendments to *the Rules of Procedure* shall be made with the agreement of the Managing Authority under pain of nullity.
3. The Rules of Procedure shall enter into force on the date of their approval.

On behalf of the SPF Beneficiary

Name:

Caption:

Place and date:

Appendices:

1. declaration of impartiality and confidentiality.

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Annex 1 to the Rules of Procedure of the selection and work of experts for the Small Project Fund

DECLARATION OF IMPARTIALITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

I, the signatory _____

I declare that I undertake to comply with the provisions concerning conflict of interests stipulated in Article 61 of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast):

„1. Financial actors and other persons, including national authorities at any level, involved in budget implementation under direct, indirect and shared management, including acts preparatory thereto, audit or control, shall not take any action which may bring their own interests into conflict with those of the Union. They shall also take appropriate measures to prevent a conflict of interests from arising in the functions under their responsibility and to address situations which may objectively be perceived as a conflict of interests.

2. Where there is a risk of a conflict of interests involving a member of staff of a national authority, the person in question shall refer the matter to his or her hierarchical superior. Where such a risk exists for staff covered by the Staff Regulations, the person in question shall refer the matter to the relevant authorising officer by delegation. The relevant hierarchical superior or the authorising officer by delegation shall confirm in writing whether a conflict of interests is found to exist. Where a conflict of interests is found to exist, the appointing authority or the relevant national authority shall ensure that the person in question ceases all activity in the matter. The relevant authorising officer by delegation or the relevant national authority shall ensure that any further appropriate action is taken in accordance with the

applicable law, including, in the cases involving a member of staff of a national authority, with the national law relating to conflict of interests.

3. For the purposes of paragraph 1, a conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person, as referred to in paragraph 1, is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect personal interest”;

I confirm that I have read *the Rules of Procedure for the selection and work of experts for the Small Project Fund implemented under the Interreg NEXT Programme Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027*, the available programme information and documents concerning the evaluation of small projects.

I declare my readiness to evaluate small projects in a reliable and impartial manner and to carry out other tasks resulting from the participation in the work of the Team of experts at the same time declaring that:

1. My ability to perform my role in the Team of experts impartially and objectively is/is not* compromised for reasons of family, emotional, sympathies, economic interest or any other direct or indirect personal interest in particular by:
 - a) participating in the preparation of the application for a small project to be evaluated.
 - b) Personal and/or institutional affiliation with any applicant/partner of a small project or entity involved in the preparation of a small project under assessment.
 - c) Having a superior or subordinate relationship to the persons involved in the submitted small project to be evaluated.
 - d) The initiation of an official investigation, disciplinary or criminal proceedings against my person to the extent that they impinge on my credibility, impartiality or integrity.
2. If, in the course of the evaluation and/or discussion at the Team of experts meeting, circumstances arise that may cast doubt on my impartial and objective performance of the assigned function, including the evaluation of a small project, I will immediately disclose any potential conflict of interest involving me and notify the Chairperson, which will result in my exclusion from the evaluation and discussion to the extent of the conflict.
3. I undertake not to use confidential information and documents that will be provided to me in connection with the activities carried out within the Team of experts for purposes other than those directly related to my activities carried out in the evaluation of small projects and the work of the Team of experts.

I acknowledge that failure to comply with the above rules will result in my dismissal from the Team of experts for the Interreg NEXT Poland-Ukraine 2021-2027 Programme and may result, inter alia, in the cancellation of the evaluation of small projects.

Place and date: _____ Signature: _____

If there is a conflict of interest, please indicate the title, the small project number and the name of the Applicant/Partner	
Small project title and number	
Name of the Applicant/Partner*	

** delete as appropriate*