



The Joint Secretariat of the Interreg South Baltic Programme is looking for professional experts to support the assessment of project proposals submitted in the funding period 2014-2020.

1. Background

The Interreg V-A Poland-Denmark-Germany-Lithuania-Sweden Programme (Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020) has been established based on Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, Regulation (EU) No. 1301/2013 and Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013. The strategic Programme document, called Cooperation Programme (CP), has been approved by the European Commission on 23 September 2015.

The Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014 – 2020 supports cross-border cooperation among coastal regions of five European Member States: Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The Programme's strategic focus is driven by the overall objective: **"To increase the blue and green growth potential of the South Baltic area through cross-border cooperation"**. The total Programme budget for cross-border cooperation projects is around EUR 77m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The Programme should, hence, play a considerable role in strengthening the development efforts of the involved regions, while contributing to an integrated development of the entire Programme area by supporting cross-border cooperation projects with mutual benefit, tangible outputs and concrete results.

Within the Programme's five Priority Axes (PA), seven specific objectives (SO) shape the thematic concentration of the Programme:

PA 1 - Strengthening the international activeness and innovation capacity of the South Baltic blue & green economy

- SO 1.1. Increase the presence of blue and green sector SMEs from the South Baltic area in international markets through joint cross-border actions;
- SO 1.2. Improve the transfer of innovation for the benefit of blue and green sector SMEs through joint cross-border actions;

PA 2 - Exploiting the environmental and cultural potential of the South Baltic area for blue and green growth

- SO 2.1: Increased development of the South Baltic area's natural and cultural heritage assets into sustainable tourist destinations;
- SO 2.2: Increased use of green technologies in order to decrease the pollution discharges in the South Baltic area;

PA 3 - Improving cross-border connectivity for a functional blue & green transport area

- SO 3: Improve the quality and environmental sustainability of transport services in the South Baltic area;

PA 4 - Boosting the human resource capacities for the area's blue & green economy

- SO 4: Increase the share of skilled labour force working in blue and green economy sectors of the South Baltic area through joint cross-border actions;

PA 5 - Increased cooperation capacity of local actors in the South Baltic area for the blue and green growth

- SO 5: Improve the cooperation capacity of local South Baltic area actors through participation in cross-border networks.

2. General procedure for the assessment of project proposals

The Joint Secretariat (JS) is responsible to the Monitoring Committee (the Programme's decision-making body selecting projects for funding) for the assessment of project applications. As the Programme's general rule, each application should be assessed by at least two JS staff members and one external expert. For detailed procedure how experts are appointed to the project assessment, see point 5 of this document.

By applying pre-defined assessment criteria and using standard assessment sheets, the experts will study the submitted applications allocated to them, followed by the drafting of their assessment reports. As the result of the assessments, the JS will prepare a consolidated assessment sheet for each project, including a summary description of the assessments done by experts and JS staff members. The consolidated assessment sheet will serve to the Monitoring Committee as a baseline for the decisions. Should essential discrepancies occur between assessments of the expert and JS staff members, the experts will be asked to discuss their assessment reports with the JS (preferably over the phone) and to agree on a common standpoint.

3. Requirements regarding the profiles of the experts

In order to establish a pool of external assessors at Programme level, the JS is looking for experienced individuals (thematic experts, professional consultants, practitioners, academic researchers, etc.) who will form the external assessment team. Prospective independent experts are expected to have a high level of professional experience in one or more thematic fields covered by the Programme's Priority Axes and the respective Specific Objectives. Hence, interested experts must fulfill the following requirements:

- have a university degree;
- have at least 5 years professional experience (following the award of the university degree) acquired in positions related to one or more thematic fields of the Programme Priorities and the Programme's Specific Objectives;
- have relevant professional experience in the Baltic Sea region cooperation and knowledge about the regions covered by the Programme;
- have proven experience in cohesion policy, European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) and/or international cooperation;
- have experience in assessment or evaluation tasks at programme and/or project level;
- be fluent in speaking, reading and writing in English (at least at C1 level).

Experience in the assessment of proposals for cooperation projects under national, European or international funding programmes as well as under programmes directly managed by the European Commission is considered as an advantage.

Experts should also dispose of expertise on cross cutting issues such as:

- transnational and cross-border cooperation;
- transnational and cross-border project management and budgetary issues;
- administration, management and/or evaluation of projects, programmes or policies;
- analysis and monitoring of policy measures and instruments;
- exploitation of project results, dissemination, communication, capitalisation and knowledge transfer;

4. Tasks to be accomplished

The tasks to be accomplished by the expert consist of the quality assessment (strategic and operational features) of the project proposals, to be executed under the coordination of the JS.

The expert's tasks include the following:

- acquaintance of relevant Programme documents (e.g. Cooperation Programme, Programme Manual, application package, assessment documents, etc.);
- closely communicate and exchange with the JS;
- quality assessment of project proposals according to the following assessment criteria:

strategic

- projects' context (relevance and strategy);
- cooperation character;
- project's contribution to the Programme's objectives, expected results and outputs;
- partnership relevance;

operational

- management;
- communication;
- work plan;
- budget;

Experts have to appraise each sub-criterion with a score, accompanied by a clear qualitative description (highlighting the strengths and weaknesses) justifying the given score as well as providing assessment conclusions per criterion and for the project proposal as a whole. The expert's conclusions must be presented in a clearly structured and comprehensive way, putting the JS in the position to justify a funding recommendation or rejection by the Programme. In case of recommending a project proposal for funding expert shall define specific recommendations, conditions and/or clarifications for necessary amendments during the clarification phase. In case of insufficient quality of the assessments provided or essential discrepancies occur between assessments of the experts and JS staff members, experts might be asked to discuss their assessments with the JS in the frame of the consolidation process. Therefore they have to ensure their availability also after the delivery of the assessments.

5. Application and selection procedure

Applications may be submitted at any time, however the deadline for participating in the assessment of project proposals received under the second call for proposals is **01 July 2016**. Applications submitted after this date will be considered only for the assessment of following calls for project proposals.

Interested experts who fulfil the above-described requirements should submit their applications by e-mail to the following address: southbaltic@southbaltic.eu. Please use the enclosed application form to provide the requested information. Application must be submitted as signed scan.

Only those candidates who meet the criteria set out under point 3 will be included in the pool of experts. The successful experts will be informed about their inclusion in the South Baltic's experts' pool for the assessment of project proposals. Experts will be included in the pool for the entire programming period 2014-2020. However, it shall be noted that the inclusion in the experts' pool does not guarantee the selection and appointment for the assessment of project proposals.

The experts successfully included in the pool might be appointed to assess projects proposals basing on:

- the thematic scope of the received project applications;
- their thematic expertise and knowledge to carry out the assessment;
- their availability in a given timeframe;
- their impartiality to perform the assessment (impartiality declaration to be signed).

The pool of the Interreg South Baltic Programme external experts will be published on the Programme website.

6. Work schedule

Provisional timeframe of the assessment process

Time frame	Experts involvement
Up to 1 month (after the closure of each call for proposals)	appointment of the experts to particular projects; verifying experts' availability; signing contracts with the appointed experts;
month 2	assessment of the projects; delivery of the assessment to the JS;
month 3	being available for clarifications;

The second call for proposals is to be closed on 17 June 2016, thus it is expected that experts will be involved in the project assessment from mid July to mid August 2016 and shall be also available in case of clarifications until end September 2016. Please note that the concrete dates of the assessment period and the deadline of the delivery of work will be included in the contracts and will be set on individual basis.

7. Remuneration

The expert is entitled to a fee of EUR 200 (gross) per each project proposal assessed. One expert may receive more than one project for the assessment in one call.