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**NEXT MED**

# Interreg NEXT MED Programme

## Call for expression of interest to set-up a roster of external experts



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## Art. 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Interreg NEXT MED is a Programme funded by the European Union (EU) that supports transnational cooperation through the financing of joint projects which aim at making the Mediterranean area more resilient to the shared challenges it faces.

NEXT MED is part of Interreg<sup>1</sup>, a key instrument of the European Union which promotes European territorial cooperation across borders by means of joint Programmes, projects and networks among national, regional and local actors from different EU Member States and among EU actors and adjacent non-EU countries, partner countries, overseas countries and territories (OCTs).

In light of the positive EU cooperation with neighbouring countries placed along the EU external borders from the Northern Periphery to the Mediterranean region and from Atlantic to Black Sea Basin – established under European Neighborhood Policy and funded by the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) for the period 2007-2013 and further reconfirmed under the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) for the period 2014-2020 –the external dimension of EU territorial cooperation with partner and IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) countries is governed by the EU Cohesion Policy for the period 2021-2027 and the Programmes will be fully part of Interreg under the NEXT (acronym for “Neighborhood External”) component.

Building on the experience and results of ENPI (2007-2013) and ENI (2014-2020) cross-border cooperation (CBC) ‘Mediterranean Sea Basin’ (MED) Programmes, Interreg NEXT MED will continue to support effective Euro-Mediterranean relations for the period 2021-2027 as part of Interreg strand B “Transnational Cooperation”.

With a budget of €263 million, Interreg NEXT MED aims at contributing to smart, sustainable, fair development for all across the Mediterranean basin by supporting balanced, long-lasting, far-reaching cooperation and multilevel governance. The Programme mission is to finance transnational cooperation projects that address joint socio-economic, environmental and governance challenges at Mediterranean level such as the uptake of advanced technologies, competitiveness of SMEs and job creation, energy efficiency, water management, climate change adaptation, transition to a circular and resource efficient economy, education and training, health care.

The Cooperation Programme focuses on the following 4 Priorities and 9 Specific Objectives:

The following table shows the 4 Programme Priorities and related 9 Specific Objectives:

<sup>1</sup>Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial_en)



Priorities	Specific Objectives
<b>1. A more competitive and smarter Mediterranean</b>	1.1 Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
	1.2 Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments
<b>2. A greener, low-carbon and resilient Mediterranean</b>	2.1 Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
	2.2 Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account ecosystem-based approaches
	2.3 Promoting access to water and sustainable water management
	2.4 Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy
<b>3. A more social and inclusive Mediterranean</b>	3.1 Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training
	3.2 Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care
<b>4.A better cooperation governance for the Mediterranean</b>	4.1 Other governance actions: Fostering local governance models and processes through cross-sectoral, multilevel and cross-border partnerships, encouraging the cooperation and dialogue between citizens, civil society actors and institutions in view of addressing issues of joint interest at local level through transnational exchanges, bottom-up and participatory approaches

The Interreg NEXT MED Programme document, approved by the European Commission on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 n. C (2022) 9543 and modified on 15.12.2023 EC decision n. 9118, offers a detailed description of the content of each Priority<sup>2</sup>.

Projects financed by the Programme are selected through calls for proposals. The first call for the submission of project proposals is currently being published. The call concerns the 4 priorities of the Programme and the related specific objectives, with three different categories of projects that will be funded: thematic projects, youth-oriented projects and governance projects. For further details, please refer to the published documentation<sup>3</sup>.

## Art.2 ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

<sup>2</sup> Programme Document available at: [Reference documents - Interreg NEXT MED](#)

<sup>3</sup> Please see <https://www.interregnextmed.eu/apply-for-funding/first-call-for-proposals/>



The evaluation of proposals is carried out in two (2) steps.

- Step 1
  - Administrative compliance checks of the project proposal (performed by staff of Managing Authority (MA), the Joint Secretariat (JS) and the Branch Offices (BOs))
  - Operational evaluation i.e. evaluation of the quality and feasibility of the project carried out by thematic experts in the subjects referred to in the specific objectives of the Programme (see table above).
  
- Step 2
  - Strategic evaluation: consisting of the strategic evaluation, performed by the Assessment Board (AB) (the AB is set up by the Monitoring Committee (MC) composed of one representative and one substitute for each participating country).
  - Verification of the eligibility of Applicants' and partners' organisations performed by staff of Managing Authority (MA), the Joint Secretariat (JS) and the Branch Offices (BOs).
  - Verification of the compliance with State Aid by expert evaluators, in accordance with the EU Regulation no. 1059/2021 and EU Regulation 2023/1315 of 23 June 2023 which modifies the n. 651/2014 governing the exemption regime which concerns the notification to the European Union of state aid payable to companies.
  - Verification of potential effects on the environment by environmental experts pursuant to art. 22.4 (j) of EU regulation no. 1059/2021.

Interested candidates, having the requirements specified below, are invited to submit the application in order to constitute a list of highly qualified experts to support the Managing Authority<sup>4</sup> for the evaluation of the project proposals presented as specified below:

- *Profile A*– a roster of thematic **Evaluators**<sup>5</sup> specialized in matters related to the specific objectives of the Programme;
- *Profile B*– a roster of **State Aid Experts**
- *Profile C*– a roster of **Environmental Experts**

Please note that being registered in the rosters does not imply any obligations to award a contract to the experts.

### Art. 3 DESCRIPTION OF TASKS

In the fields of activity of the Interreg Next Med Programme, the main duties of the contracted External Experts should include the common and specific tasks detailed below and any other related task required by the MA to fully complete the proposals' assessments / verification:

<sup>4</sup> Please see the documents related to the Call for Proposals available at: <https://www.interregnextmed.eu/apply-for-funding/first-call-for-proposals/submit-a-proposal/>

<sup>5</sup> Thematic evaluators shall have a thematic competence in one or more Programme Specific Objectives.



## Common tasks

The external experts will support the Assessment Board (AB), ensuring the necessary thematic expertise relevant for the specific objectives. These tasks include the following activities:

- Provide further comments at the request of the Assessment Board (AB);
- Participation in trainings organized by the MA/JS (*online mode*)<sup>6</sup> relative to: Interreg NEXT MED Programme Document, regulatory framework, Guidelines for Applicants and Application Pack of each call for proposals, Guidelines for the evaluation and selection of project proposals, etc.
- Assist, if necessary, in the procedure for defining responses to requests for any clarifications.

## Specific Tasks

**Profile A - Thematic Evaluators** The main task of the External Evaluators (thematic) relies, but is not limited to the operational assessment of the project proposals, to be carried out under the coordination of the Managing Authority (MA) in accordance with the Programme rules and the Call application package. They will be in charge of content-wise and financial assessment of each project proposal and also the following specific tasks:

- Operational Evaluation (STEP 1) of the proposal according to the evaluation rules and criteria included in the Guidelines for the Evaluation and Selection of Project Proposals and the Guidelines for Applicants; Complete all sections of the evaluation grids including a summary with clear comments (highlighting the strengths and weaknesses), duly substantiating the given score;
- Be available to present and discuss the results of their assessment during the meetings of the Assessment Board (and/or of the Monitoring Committee).

## Profile B - State aid experts

State aid experts will assist the AB by determining the presence and value of State Aid, pursuant to EU Regulation 2023/1315 which modifies the n. 651/2014 (so-called GBER Regulation), EU Regulation no. 1059/2021, as detailed in the documents related to the call for proposals.

The verification will aim to determine whether the planned activities constitute state aid and their value, as declared by the candidates under their own responsibility in the self-declaration form.

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<sup>6</sup> The training is mandatory in order to sign the contract.



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The experts will fill in a state aid checklist for each project examined with an indication of the reasons, the regulatory references and the formulation of any clauses to be included in the draft financing agreements. In addition to the common tasks mentioned above, the state aid experts will guarantee:

- Acquaintance of relevant documents concerning State Aid (e.g. relevant EU regulations, Informative Note on State Aid).
- Verification of the project proposals during STEP2, through specific check lists on State Aid checks provided by the MA. Provision of additional comments regarding the evaluation of state aid aspects at the request of the MA, the Assessment Board and the MC;
- in exceptional situations, attendance in the meetings of the Assessment Board as observers to present the results of their assessment and answer questions from Assessment Board members.

### Profile C - Environmental experts

After Step 1, Environmental experts will assist the Assessment Board in the verification of the pre-selected proposals with reference to project output(s) with a potential environmental impact, providing recommendations for ensuring the compliance with the environmental standards of the approved projects.

This information will be part of the mandatory “Environmental sustainability” sections of the Application Form. Those proposals submitted under certain Programme priorities (i.e. 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4<sup>7</sup>) will be requested to provide additional information, by filling in specific check lists, namely Check list (A) and, as the case may be, also Check list (B), as they were identified among those which can potentially have an environmental impact.

More specific requirements are expected to be met by those proposals including an infrastructure component of at least 1 million euro and, therefore, needing a more detailed environmental assessment and an additional Check list (C) to be filled in. In any case, the MA could require further information also to any proposal submitted under other priorities.

Thus, the expert could be required to assess only the mandatory “Environmental sustainability” sections of the Application Form and the Check list (A), or if needed, also Check list (B) and (C).

In particular, in addition to the common task mentioned above, the specific tasks of the selected environmental experts will be:

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<sup>7</sup> Numbering according to the call for proposals.



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- assessment of the information provided by the Applicants as regards the environmental impact of the project proposals pre-selected through specific check lists provided by the MA;
- provision of recommendations in order to comply with the environmental standards, including monitoring recommendations, and to ensure the compliance with the *Do No Significant Harm principle*<sup>8</sup>.

### Art. 4 SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants must meet the selection criteria as detailed herewith.

#### General criteria applicable to all profiles

- 1) have a level of education corresponding to a completed university degree attested by a diploma (undergraduate/bachelor);
- 2) at least 5 years of professional experience in the selected specific topic (s) of the chosen profile(s);
- 3) be fluent in speaking, reading and writing in English or French, at least level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) - knowledge of both languages and the possession of communication skills at C1+ level in the language of specialization will be an advantage;
- 4) have proper IT literacy necessary to complete the assignment;
- 5) absence of any conflict of interest from any Programme bodies or Programme projects applicants or beneficiaries involved in the calls for proposals;

#### Specific criteria – Profile A – Thematic Evaluator

- have a level of education corresponding to a completed university degree attested by a diploma relevant to one or more of the selected specific objective/s covered by the Programme Priorities (undergraduate/bachelor);
- have at least 5 years of proven professional experience acquired in positions related to one or more of the selected Specific objective/s covered by the Programme Priorities;
- have prior and proven experience in technical and financial assessment of project proposals of EU/international cooperation Programmes;

#### Specific criteria – Profile B – State Aid Expert

- have a proven experience in the application of the EU state aid discipline as well as knowledge of judgments provided by the European Union Court of Justice;
- experience in the application of the state aid discipline in the framework of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes would be an advantage.

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<sup>8</sup>See the Strategic Environmental Assessment document: pre-assessment and opinion of the Italian competent National Authority.



### Specific criteria – Profile C – Environmental Expert

- have a professional experience of at least 5 years in environmental-related disciplines following the award of a university degree attested by a diploma;
- have carried out at least two environmental assessments in any related field covered by the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).

## Art. 5 Application procedure

In order to be considered for the selection process candidates are invited to apply English, French which are the working languages of Interreg NEXT MED Programme.

Candidates must submit the following application package in PDF version:

- a) **Application form duly completed, dated and signed**, according to the profile(s) for which the candidate wants to apply Attachment (Profile A, B C).
- b) Professional CV, dated and signed, in **European format**,

**The documents referred to the points a), b)** must be digitally signed or with scanned signature and with a scanned identity document (pdf).

Incomplete applications, not including all the above-mentioned documents, may be rejected.

Applications must only be sent by email to:

[roster.nextmed@regione.sardegna.it](mailto:roster.nextmed@regione.sardegna.it)

**Closing date: Application must be sent by 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2024 at 12:00:00 Central Europe Time (CET).**

## Art. 6 Selection procedure

The Operational and authorization Unit of the Managing Authority check the applications exclusively aimed at verifying the relevance and compatibility of the qualifications and experience acquired in relation to the professional position to be held. and reserves the right to check the veracity of the data entered in the Curriculum Vitae.

All candidates who meet the specified requirements will be entered, in alphabetical order, in a list, which will be approved by the Operational and authorization Unit of the Managing Authority and published on the website of the Interreg Programme NEXT MED 2021-2027 [http://www.interregnextmed.eu\(\)](http://www.interregnextmed.eu()).

The inclusion in the list does not provide for set up a roster and the Operational and authorization Unit of the Managing Authority will use the list to select the experts who, from the examination of the CV, will be correspondents to the requirements of realization of the



activities.

The Authorizing Unit has no obligation to proceed with the assignment of the aforementioned roles which are only planned but not established. These roles will be assigned according to the forms established by the law of occasional self-employment or similar appointments. The payment due is defined according to the art. 9.

## Art. 7 Validity of the Rosters

The list of experts, drawn up on the basis of this call, remains valid for entire Programme Implementation period 2021-2027 and may be reopened and updated.

## Art. 8 Contracting and conditions of employment

The number of experts to be contracted will depend on the specific needs of the MA in consideration of the number of project proposals received.

The selection of the experts and their appointment for the assessment will be based on the criteria set under article 4.

Before signing the contract with the Authorizing Unit of the MA, the selected candidates may be requested to submit supporting documents (i.e., copy of university degree certificates of working experience, etc.). The Authorizing Unit of the MA may not sign the contracts with the candidates who will not be able to certify the declarations contained in the application and in the CV.

The assignment of the project proposals procedure will ensure transparency and balanced representation of participating countries, while respecting equality of opportunities and non-discrimination principles.

The indicative number of proposals to be assessed by each expert and the deadline to complete the tasks, as well as the indicative date of the training session will be explicitly communicated by the Authorizing Unit of the MA before signing the contract in order to enable the expert to verify his/her availability to fulfill all tasks in time.

The expert will receive the appointment letter, specifying the timeframe and the total number of project proposals assigned, which must be returned signed for acceptance. Further assignments will be made using the same procedure. The appointment letters shall form the contract.

Experts will be free to resign from the roster,

## Art. 9 Working modalities/Other terms of the assignment/Fees and payment modalities

Meetings and trainings will be held *on line*. The training is compulsory for all evaluators.



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Experts will be required to carry on their tasks remotely using their own tools. The assessment of the assigned applications shall be performed and finalized online using Programme IT tool for project assessment.

The number of applications which will be assigned to an expert may vary depending on the thematic scope and number of proposals received and will be agreed between the expert and the Authorizing Unit of the MA.

Following the project assessment carried out for the Programme, the **External expert profile A** shall be entitled to a fee of: 450,00 euro (four hundred and fifty euro) including VAT and any other taxes, for each assessed application.

Following the project assessment carried out for the Programme, the **State aid expert profile B** shall be entitled to a fee of: 350,00 euro (three hundred and fifty euro) including VAT and any other taxes, for each assessed application.

For the **Environmental Expert profile C** the fixed rate for the environmental assessment will be:

- EUR 150,00 (one hundred and fifty euro - duties and taxes included, excluding those due by the contracting administration) for each project proposal assessed, for the analysis of the three environmental boxes and for the assessment of the Check list (A) included in the Application Form;
- EUR 100,00 (one hundred euro - duties and taxes included, excluding those due by the contracting administration) for each project proposal assessed, for the additional analysis of the Check list (B) included in the Application Form;
- EUR 350,00 (three hundred and fifty euro - duties and taxes included, excluding those due by the contracting administration) for each project proposal assessed, for the additional analysis of the Check list (C) included in the Application Form.

### Art. 10 Conflict of interest

At the time of the appointment, selected experts are required to sign a declaration of impartiality stating that no conflict of interest exists and that they undertake to inform the Authorizing Unit of the MA if any situation of conflict, even potential, or external attempt to interfere occurs while carrying out their duties.

A conflict of interest exists if the impartial and objective function of an expert is jeopardized for reasons involving family, emotional life or political affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with the project applicants.

Experts must be independent and must not assess applications submitted by institutions or individuals with whom they have a personal link and they shall engage themselves not to offer their services to successful project applicants or partners that they have assessed.

The role of external expert is incompatible with:

- being a voting or a non-voting member of the AB and of the Monitoring Committee;





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- being permanently or temporarily employed by the Authorizing Unit of the MA, the Joint Secretariat or the Branch Offices;
- being national contact point/person in charge of giving general information to potential applicants;
- participate in working groups of the advisory service providers in the Authorising and Operational Unit of the MA;
- being/having been employed by or providing/having provided (in the past one year) any services to organizations involved in the project proposals (meaning by/to applicants, partners or other subjects involved in project activities as subcontractor).
- being/having been employed by or providing/having provided (in the past one year from the date of publication of the call for proposals) any services, within organizations involved at different levels in the project proposals (applicants, partners, subcontractors, beneficiaries of sub-grants or other) that may be assessed.

### **Art. 11 Confidentiality**

Experts will have to observe complete confidentiality of the information and documents brought to their attention during the whole evaluation process as well as on the results of the evaluation. To this regard, they will have to sign a declaration of confidentiality in which they commit not to disclose any information related to the project's evaluation process.

### **Art. 12 Personal data treatment**

Personal data submitted by the experts will be only used for the participation to the selection procedure and for the possible signature of a contract with the Authorizing Unit of the MA, in compliance with the terms and indications of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 (GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation), as specified in the "Information note on personal data treatment according to GDPR"(Annex IV)<sup>9</sup>.

### **Art. 13 Publication of the call and results of the selection procedure**

This call is available on the official website of the Programme: [www.interregnextmed.eu](http://www.interregnextmed.eu) in English and French.

The results of the procedure will be published on the website of the Programme [www.interregnextmed.eu](http://www.interregnextmed.eu) and on the official website of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia [www.regione.sardegna.it](http://www.regione.sardegna.it)

<sup>9</sup> Please consult <https://www.regione.sardegna.it/regione/strutture-di-garanzia/responsabile-protezione-dati/documenti-e-normativa/informativa-ai-sensi-dell-articolo-13-14-del-regolamento-2016-679>



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### **Art. 14 Applicable law**

Any dispute arising from the present procedure shall be submitted to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court of Cagliari.

### **Art. 15 Final provisions**

The Authorizing Unit of the MA reserves the right to modify, extend, suspend entirely or partially or revoke this call. The participation in the selection procedure involves the implicit and unconditional acceptance of the provisions of this call. For any further information, please contact the person in charge of the procedure by email: [roster.nextmed@regione.sardegna.it](mailto:roster.nextmed@regione.sardegna.it)

### **Art.16 Person in charge of the procedure**

In charge as responsible for the procedure is the Head of Authorising and operational Unit of the Unit of the MA.

