1. Terms of reference

Coordination of the preparation and writing of an INTERREG-funded project on the governance of forest ecosystems in the Mediterranean.

## Context

This consultation is published by Plan Bleu, the Regional Activity Centre of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), established as a non-profit association under French law (Loi 1901) with its headquarters in Marseille. The MAP is one of the main components of the Regional Seas Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It operates under a legal framework—the Barcelona Convention—and relies on six Regional Activity Centers (RACs), which are responsible for supporting the implementation of 7 protocols associated with the convention. Plan Bleu is one of the six centers, mandated by the twenty-one countries along with the European Union that are the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. It serves as an observatory for the environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean, conducting thematic, systemic, and foresight analyses to provide insights for decision-makers and stakeholders in the region on environmental risks and sustainable development challenges.

The Mediterranean basin, the world's second-largest biodiversity hotspot, is undergoing accelerated global warming, endangering its unique ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. In the southern and eastern Mediterranean, forestry legislation and regulations are no longer able to reconcile the needs of local populations with the preservation of forests, which are increasingly threatened by biodiversity loss and climate change.

Two key findings emerged during the 8th Mediterranean Forest Week, that took place in Barcelona from November 4-7, 2024:

* The conservation of forest ecosystems cannot be achieved without involving local populations who benefit from forest resources.
* Governance frameworks must evolve to ensure resilience to climate change.

To address this issue, Plan Bleu plans to submit a project to strengthen the governance of forest ecosystems in the Mediterranean, in response to the ongoing Interreg Next MED call for projects, which is set to close on April 15th 2025.

This project aims to align with Specific Objective 4.1 of the call for projects' terms of reference: "Actions to support better cooperation governance of climate resilience."

The general objective of the project is : "Enhancing governance frameworks for Mediterranean forest ecosystems at local, national, and regional levels to strengthen climate resilience."

This consultancy comes after an initial phase of work from 4th to 17th of March 2025 led by IUCN-Med which should have achieved the following objectives:

* Finalize the identification of the consortium, including the lead partner,
* Finalize the concept note and develop a first draft of the proposal,
* Conduct an initial definition of roles and responsibilities,
* Develop a first draft of the budget.

1. **Objectives and activity description**

The overall objective of the assignment is to coordinate and support the finalization and the submission of the project proposal.

The mission will include:

### Consortium Coordination

* Ensure smooth and effective communication between consortium partners.
* If needed, follow up on the finalization of partner identification, including the Lead Partner.
* Organize coordination meetings and draft meeting minutes.
* Ensure a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities among partners.

### Call for Proposals Analysis and Compliance

* Study the guidelines and eligibility criteria of the INTERREG NEXT MED call.
* Verify the project's alignment with the program’s objectives and priorities.
* Identify the required administrative and technical obligations.

### Proposal Writing

* Coordinate the final drafting of the project.
* Ensure coherence and alignment of the project with the program’s objectives.
* Integrate feedback from partners and refine the final version.

### Budget and Work Plan Development

* Coordinate the preparation of the projected budget in collaboration with financial partners.
* Ensure cost balance and coherence with project activities.
* Define the timeline for activities and deliverables.

### Compilation of Annexes and Administrative Documents

* Gather and verify the required documents for submission (letters of commitment, supporting documents, etc.).
* Ensure compliance with the formats and requirements of the call for proposals.

### Deadline Management and Submission

* Track the submission timeline and ensure deadlines are met.
* Conduct a final quality check before submission.
* Support the lead partner in submitting the application through the dedicated platform.

## Timeline of services and deliverables

The Consultant’s assignment is expected to take place between **March 17 and April 15** and according to the following steps:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Services and deliverables** | **Date** |
| 1 | Final drafting of the project and budget | 01/04/2025 |
| 2 | Integration of comments from partners on the proposal and budget | 11/04/2025 |
| 3 | Support of the submission of the project | 14/04/2025 |

All deliverables listed in the table above must be submitted to Plan Bleu in English. The deliverables must be formally approved by Plan Bleu before payment is made.

The consultant(s) will work under the supervision of the Biodiversity and Forest Project Officer.

## Budget

The available budget for this consultancy is 5000 euros VAT included and proposals should not exceed this amount.

## Selection criteria

This mission is open to consultant consortia and individual consultants. Candidates qualified for this mission must meet the following criteria:

**Education** :

* A **Master’s degree (Bac +5 minimum)** in **Political Science, International Relations, International Development, European Affairs, Economics, Ecology, Forestry, Project Management**, or a relevant field.

**Experience** :

* Proven experience of **minimum 5 years** in **project development, coordination, and writing** for European-funded projects (INTERREG, ENI CBC MED, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, etc.).
* Experience in **managing consortiums and coordinating international partners**.
* Experience of work in the Mediterranean region.

**Key Skills** :

* Strong conceptual and synthesis ability combined with good writing and communication skills in English is a must
* Ability to **manage an international and multisectoral consortium**.
* Strong skills in **planning, tracking deliverables, and ensuring deadlines** are met.

## Consultant selection

The selection of the expert will be based on the evaluation of their technical offer (skills in relation to the qualifications required as described above and the proposed methodology) and an evaluation of the **most economically advantageous offer**.

Candidates must provide references for their previous work on similar topics, along with relevant documents, by email to the address provided below if these are not indicated by an active web link.

Furthermore, candidates must demonstrate their legal capacity to sign contracts and issue invoices according to the legislation of their country. To this end, they must also include the following documents in their offer:

**For consultancy firms:**

* An **extract from the KBIS** (French trade register) issued within the last 3 months for France.
* A **document proving registration as a company** in their country, with the **tax number** indicated (for foreign candidates).

**For individual consultants:**

* **Certificate of registration** with the business registry or equivalent, or proof of registration with URSSAF (in France).
* A document proving the **right to practice** the profession (e.g., registration certificate) in accordance with the legislation of their country, with the **tax number** (for foreign candidates).

It is mandatory for all consultants (legal entities and individuals) to provide the following documents:

* **Complete bank account details (RIB)** (BIC, IBAN, or BBAN) provided by the bank.
* **A social security certificate (France)**:
  + A **vigilance certificate** from the social security for independents (if not affiliated with the general social security system).
  + A **vigilance certificate** for employing staff, in the case of employees or if the director is affiliated with the general social security system. This certificate must include the number of employees and the total remuneration declared by the subcontractor during their most recent due date. It also certifies compliance with social security contribution declarations and payments.
* **Certificate regarding the employment of non-EU nationals**:  
  The consultant must not employ foreign workers in an irregular situation. They should provide a **sworn statement** indicating whether or not they intend to employ foreign nationals subject to a work permit. If so, they must provide a list of those employees, including their start dates, nationalities, type and number of work authorization permits.

The Consultant shall submit these documents upon conclusion of the contract.

## Contractual, Financial, and Practical Conditions

The acceptance of the selected offer implies acceptance of the terms and detailed schedules outlined in these Terms of Reference, including the following payment schedule:

* **100% of the contract amount** will be paid upon submission of the project on the INTERREG NEXT MED platform.

A properly issued invoice will be required for the scheduled payments, containing the following mandatory details:

* Full name + address of the service provider
* SIRET number (France) or tax number (for non-France)
* Invoice issuance date
* Invoice number
* Service description (e.g., name of the deliverable)
* Amount excluding taxes (HT), VAT, and total amount (TTC), in the currency specified in the contract
* For individuals not subject to VAT (France): include the mention **“TVA non applicable, article 293B du code général des impôts”**
* Payment due date

The payment term for invoices will be as follows: **bank transfer within 15 days** after the invoice date.  
The tax legislation in force at the time of acceptance of the offer will apply.

## Application procedures

Interested candidates are invited to submit the following documents:

* A technical offer, including a resume showcasing relevant experience in developing and submitting Interreg projects, with references to similar projects
* A financial offer with an estimation of working days.

The application files must be submitted no later than **March 13, 2025**, via [www.planbleu.org](http://www.planbleu.org) and by email to the attention of [awittevrongel@planbleu.org](mailto:awittevrongel@planbleu.org) and [aterrisse@planbleu.org](mailto:aterrisse@planbleu.org).

For more information, please contact: Alice Wittevrongel, [awittevrongel@planbleu.org](mailto:awittevrongel@planbleu.org)