

Partnership Agreement for the implementation of the Project
Support for ecological connectivity through biodiversity stepping stones in the forests of Slovak Paradise National Park

between

Daphne – Institute of Applied Ecology
Podunajská 24, 821 06 Bratislava, Slovakia
ID: 30814081, Tax ID: 2020912157
Represented by RNDr. Ján Šeffler, CSc

And

Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH - School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL
Langgasse 85, 3052 Zollikfen, Switzerland
ID: CHE-319.685.045 MWST
Represented by: Prof. Dr. Thibault Lachat and Prof. Dr. Bernhard Pauli

hereinafter referred to individually as a “**Party**” and collectively as the “**Parties**”

PREAMBLE:

The Framework Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Swiss Federal Council on the implementation of the second Swiss contribution to selected Member States of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union, was signed in Bratislava, on 19. September 2023 (hereinafter referred to as “**the Framework Agreement**”);

Under the Framework Agreement, the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic acts as the National Coordination Unit (hereinafter referred to as “**the NCU**”) and as the Programme Operator (hereinafter referred to as “**the Programme Operator**”);

The Support Measure Agreement between the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (hereinafter referred to as “**the SECO**”) and the NCU on the Support Measure *Promoting Sustainable Tourism and Strengthening Biodiversity in Protected Areas* was concluded on *December 6th, 2024* (hereinafter referred to as “**the Support Measure Agreement**”);

The Project Contract between Daphne – Institute of applied ecology (hereinafter referred to as the “**Project Promoter**”) and the Programme Operator on the implementation of the Project named *Support for ecological connectivity through biodiversity stepping stones in the forests of Slovak Paradise National Park* was concluded on *November 14th, 2025* (hereinafter referred to as “**the Project**”);

Since the *Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH - School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL* acts as Swiss Support Measure Partner (hereinafter referred to as “**the Partner**”) and under the Article 4.2 of the Regulation on the implementation of the Second Swiss Contribution to selected Member States of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union, with annexes (hereinafter referred to as “**the Regulations**”) the Project Promoter shall conclude the Partnership Agreement, the Parties has agreed as follows:

Article 1– Scope and objectives

- 1.1 This Partnership Agreement (hereinafter referred to as the “**Agreement**”) defines the rights and obligations of the Parties and sets forth the terms and conditions of their cooperation in the implementation of the Project.
- 1.2 The Parties shall act in accordance with the Legal Framework of the Second Swiss Contribution set in the Article 2 of the Framework Agreement (hereinafter referred to as the “**Legal Framework**”) mainly with the Regulations as well as the all conditions set in the Project Contract. The Parties expressly acknowledge to have access to and to be familiar with the content of the Legal Framework and the most decisive part of the Project Contract.
- 1.3 Any Annexes to this Agreement constitute an integral part of the Agreement. In case of inconsistencies between the Annexes and the Agreement, the latter shall prevail.
- 1.4 The main objective of the Partnership Agreement is to achieve *the support of long-term biodiversity conservation and to increase the ecological resilience of forest ecosystems in the Slovak Paradise National Park through the identification of forest structures, the strengthening of ecological connectivity and the expansion of non-interference areas.*

Article 2– Entry into force and duration

- 2.1 This Agreement shall enter into force on the date of the last signature by the Parties. It shall remain in force until the Partner has discharged in full its obligations towards the Project Promoter as defined in this Agreement.

Article 3 – Main roles and responsibilities of the Parties

- 3.1 The Parties shall take all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure fulfilment of the obligations and objectives arising out of this Agreement.
- 3.2 The Parties shall carry out their respective obligations with efficiency, transparency and diligence. They shall keep each other informed about all matters of importance to the overall cooperation and the implementation of the activities to be performed. They shall act in good faith in all matters and shall, at all times, act in the interest of the Project.
- 3.3 The Parties shall make available sufficient and qualified personnel, which shall carry out their work with the highest professional standard. While carrying out the assignment under this Agreement, the personnel and entities engaged by either Party shall comply with the laws of the respective countries.
- 3.4 Whenever in the performance of their assignments under this Agreement the Parties’ personnel are on the premises of the other Party, or at any other location in the other Party’s country on request of such Party, that Party shall ensure that such premises and locations comply with all applicable national health, safety and environmental laws and standards. The Parties shall take all necessary precautions to prevent the occurrence of any injury to persons or damage to the property of the other Party in connection with the implementation of the Project.

3.5 Each Party shall appoint a Project Manager who shall have operational responsibility for the implementation of the Project as well as serve as contact point for all exchanges of communication, documentation and materials between the Parties.

3.6 The Parties shall carry out the activities set in annex no.1 of this Agreement (hereinafter referred to as the "*List of activities*").

Article 4– Obligations of the Project Promoter

4.1 The Project Promoter is responsible for the overall coordination, management and implementation of the Project in accordance with the regulatory and contractual framework specified herein. It assumes sole responsibility for the successful implementation of the Project towards the Programme Operator.

4.2 The Project Promoter undertakes to, *inter alia*:

- (a) ensure the correct and timely implementation of the activities;
- (b) promptly inform the Partner on all circumstances that may have a negative impact on the correct and timely implementation of any of the activities, and of any event that could lead to a temporary or final discontinuation or any other deviation of the Project;
- (c) provide the Partner with access to all available documents, data, and information in its possession that may be necessary or useful for the Partner to fulfil its obligations; in cases where such documents, data and information are not in English, it shall provide an English translation thereof when so requested by the Partner;
- (d) provide, upon request, the Partner with a copy of the signed Project Contract, including any subsequent amendments thereof as of their entry into force;
- (e) consult the Partner before submission of any request for amendment of the Project Contract to the Programme Operator that may affect or be of interest for the Partner's role, rights and obligations hereunder;
- (f) prepare and submit in a timely manner to the Programme Operator all relevant documentation in connection with the payment claims, in compliance with the Support Measure Agreement and the Project Contract so as to meet the payment deadlines towards the Partner as stipulated in this Agreement;
- (g) transfer to the Partner's nominated bank account all payments due by the set deadlines;
- (h) ensure that the Partner promptly receives all assistance it may require for the performance of its tasks;

4.3 In case the Project Promoter discovers, that the Partner does not implement the Project to the extent and in the correct manner pursuant to this Agreement, or breaches the duties following from this Agreement, in a way that impedes the implementation of the Project, according to this Agreement, the Project Promoter shall inform, without undue delay, the Programme Operator and recommend, if appropriate, consultations with other Partner, the change of the Project Application; which implies that the Parties are obliged without undue delay to consult other possibilities and ways of fulfilment of the subject matter and purpose of this Agreement, including the possibility of the Partner to terminate this Agreement, or accession of the third party to this Agreement, and for this purpose to conclude an amendment to this Agreement, governing their mutual rights and responsibilities concerning the implementation of the Project.

Article 5 – Obligations of the Partner

5.1 The Partner is responsible for the performance of the activities and tasks assigned to it in accordance with this Agreement and Annex no.1 “*List of activities*” and Annex no. 2 “*Swiss partner budget*”

5.2 In addition to the above obligations, the Partner shall:

- (a) promptly inform the Project Promoter on relevant circumstances that may have an impact on the correctness, timeliness and completeness of its performance;
- (b) provide the Project Promoter with all information necessary for the preparation of *any reports due by the Project Promoter to the Programme Operator, especially Request for Reimbursements* within the deadlines and according to the reporting forms set by the Programme Operator;
- (c) immediately inform the Project Promoter of any cases of suspected or actual fraud, corruption or other illegal activity that come to its attention, at any level or any stage of implementation of the Project;
- (d) keep all supporting documents regarding the Project, including the incurred expenditure, either in the form of originals or in versions certified to be in conformity with the originals on commonly accepted data carriers, for at least 10 years from the SECO’s approval of the final Support Measure report;
- (e) provide any bodies carrying out mid-term or ex-post evaluations of the Support Measure, as well as any monitoring, audits and on the spot verifications on behalf of the Second Swiss Contribution any document or information necessary to assist with the evaluation;
- (f) effectively participate in promoting the objectives, activities and results of the Second Swiss Contribution as well as the Swiss contribution to reducing economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area;
- (g) participate actively in promotional and other events related to the Project and also promote the results of the Project;
- (h) provide, upon request, of the Project Promoter necessary assistance for enabling properly and timely fulfilment of the obligations under this Agreement and the Project Contract and determine the extent and manner in which it should be granted.

Article 6 – Project budget and eligibility of expenditures

6.1 The detailed total Project budget, the budget share of the Partner as well as the allocation of the budget, amongst the activities to be performed by the Partner is fixed in Annex no. 2 “*Swiss partner budget*”.

6.2 Expenditures incurred by the Partner must be in line with the general rules on eligibility of expenditure under the Article 6.1 of the Regulation as well as the main categories of eligible direct expenditures (expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the Project) under the Article 6.2.

6.3 The eligibility of expenditures incurred by Swiss Support Measure Partner(s) is subject to the same limitations as would apply if the expenditures were incurred by the Programme Promoter.

6.4 Eligibility of expenditure for relevant travel, accommodation and subsistence allowances for Partner and the verification thereof shall be, subject to paragraph 2b) of Article 4.10 of the

Regulation in line with the Swiss Support Measure Partner's respective directive and or common Swiss practice.

- 6.5 A Project budget, as well as other detail information about the Project, in particular a way of its implementation, which are not stipulated in this Agreement, are stipulated in the current version of the Project Application and the Project Contract.
- 6.6 The Partner takes into consideration that the conditions for the provision of the funds to the Project Promoter and the way of its allocation are set in the Project Contract, the second Swiss Contribution Legal Framework and in the Implementation Rules.
- 6.7 The Partners takes into consideration that the Period of Eligibility of expenditure starts on October 2nd 2025 and ends December 31st 2028.

Article 7 – Financial management and payment arrangements

- 7.1 Payment of the project grant share to the Partner shall take the form of advance and interim payments and payment of the final balance.
- 7.2 The Project Promoter shall ensure the payment of the Project Grant to the Partner through advance/intermediate payments in accordance with Annex 2 - "Swiss Partnership Budget".
- 7.3 The advance payment to the Partner shall be made no later than 15 days of the crediting of the advance payment from the Programme to the Project Promoter's bank account.
- 7.4 Interim payments shall be paid based on the schedule for advance payments set out in Annex 3 "Advance Payment Schedule"
- 7.5 Payment claim, in accordance with Annex 4, shall be submitted to the Project Promoter for a reporting period of normally 4 months, no later than 10 working days after the end of the relevant reporting period.
- 7.6 Payment of the final balance shall be made within 30 working days of Programme approval of the Final Payment claim.
- 7.7 All amounts shall be denominated in a specific currency.
- 7.8 Since Partner keep bookkeeping in other currency than in EUR, it shall recalculate the total amount of expenditure to EUR currency using the exchange rate published by the European Commission in the month in which the expenditure was recorded in the accounts and such expenditure will be eligible up to a maximum amount so converted in EUR.
- 7.9 Any exchange rate risk shall be borne by the Project Promoter. Exchange rate losses incurred by converting Swiss Francs to Euro are considered eligible provided that they are included in the Project budget.
- 7.10 Payments to the Partner shall be made to the Partner's bank account denominated in CHF, identified as follows:

Bank:
Account holder:
UID number of the BFH:



Bank account IBAN:
Clearing:
BIC/SWIFT:
PC:



7.11 Payments shall be deemed to have been made on the date on which the Project Promoter's account is debited.

Article 8 – Proof of expenditure

- 8.1 Costs incurred by the Partner shall be supported by receipted invoices or alternatively by accounting documents of equivalent probative value.
- 8.2 Proof of expenditure shall be provided by the Partner to the Project Promoter to the extent necessary for the Project Promoter to comply with its obligations to the Programme Operator/NCU in line with the Project Contract.
- 8.3 In line with point 4 - Partner State Specific Rules and Procedures of the Annex of the Framework Agreement - Country Specific Set-up, the Partner shall submit a report by an independent auditor qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents, certifying that the costs claimed are incurred in accordance with the Regulations, the national law and relevant national accounting practices. This report shall, subject to paragraph 1 of Article 6.8 of the Regulations, be accepted as sufficient proof of expenditure incurred. The principle of proportionality shall be respected. A report issued by a competent and independent public officer recognised by the relevant national authorities as having a budget and financial control capacity over the entity incurring the costs and who has not been involved in the preparation of the financial statements, certifying that the claimed costs are incurred in accordance with the Regulations, the relevant law and national accounting practices, shall, subject to paragraph 1 of Article 6.8 of the Regulations, also be accepted as sufficient proof of expenditure incurred.
- 8.4 The report referred to in paragraph 8.3 of this Article shall be submitted to the Project Promoter if the amount of expenditure exceeds 30 000 EUR, max. once a year, but no later than December 15th of the respective year. The costs of the audit and the report shall be borne by the Project Promoter
- 8.5 Upon request by the SECO, the Partner shall grant access to the supporting documents on the basis of which the report referred to in paragraph 8.3 of this Article was issued.

Article 9 – Progress and financial reports

- 9.1 The Partner shall report to the Project Promoter the progress achieved in the implementation of the Project in the respective period preceding the submission of the Request for Reimbursement/Interim and the Final Reports and to provide the Project Promoter with all relevant supporting documents.

9.2 The Partner shall submit Interim Project Reports to the Project Promoter in the following structure:

- (a) Administrative details: the Project name, the Partner identification, the period for which the report is submitted;
- (b) Description of activities: overview of activities performed in the relevant period and their conformity with the planned outcomes;
- (c) Achieved results: brief assessment of the achieved objectives and the impact of activities;
- (d) Financial drawdown: overview of costs incurred in the relevant period in accordance with the approved budget;
- (e) Problems and risks: identification of potential problems and risks and proposals for their mitigation; and
- (f) Any other details requested by the Project Promoter.

9.3 Interim Reports shall be submitted electronically to the following email address:



9.4 The Partner shall report its expenditures to the Project Promoter according to the Article 8 of this Agreement duly and on time to enable the Project Promoter to declare all expenditures incurred in relation to the implementation of the Project in the Reimbursement Request/Interim Report and the Final Reports.

Article 10 – Post Completion obligation

10.1 The Partner shall ensure that the relevant documents relating to the Project are kept for 10 years after the completion of the Support Measure.

Article 11– Audits

11.1 Audits shall be carried out in line with Chapter 9 of the Regulations, which has been modified by point 4 - Partner State Specific Rules and Procedures of the Annex of the Framework Agreement - Country Specific Set-up as follows:

- (a) The Paragraph 4 of Article 9.2 of the Regulations has been replaced by the following: A non-statistical sampling method may be used on the professional judgment of the Audit Authority, to be duly justified in the audit strategy, in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards and in any case where the number of Projects or Programme Components for a year is insufficient to allow the use of a statistical method. The non-statistical sampling method shall cover a minimum of 10% of Projects or Programme Components for which expenditure has been declared during a year and a minimum of 15% of the expenditure which has been declared during a year.
- (b) The following Paragraph 5 has been added to Article 9.2 of the Regulations: Switzerland and Slovakia have agreed to rely for the audit of both the financial regularity and the internal control system on statutory financial external audit reports in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards. The Audit Authority may appoint an external certified auditor for each Project and Programme Component, to be paid from the respective budget of the Project or Programme Component. For Projects and Programme Components not exceeding CHF 500,000, the audit shall be carried out after the Project or Programme Component completion. Non-statistical sampling method

shall be used to verify the legality and regularity of expenditure, as described in Article 9.2.4 of the Regulations.

- (c) The following Paragraph 3 has been added to Article 9.4 of the Regulations: Access according to paragraph 2 above to locations and facilities shall be contingent upon the period set forth in Article 4.15, paragraph 2 and 3 of the Regulations.

11.2 The report submitted in line with the paragraph 8.3 of Article 8 of this Agreement shall be sufficient for the purpose of the financial audit. Under the paragraph 8.4 of the Article 8 of this Agreement, the Partner shall grant, upon request by the SECO access to the supporting documents on the basis of which the report was issued.

Article 12 – Procurement

12.1 National and EU law on public procurement shall be complied with by the Parties at any level in the implementation of the Project.

12.2 The applicable procurement law is the law of the country in which the procurement is being carried out.

12.3 The provision of the Regulations set in Article 7.1 shall be complied with.

Article 13 - Conflict of interest

13.1 The Parties shall take all necessary measures to prevent any situation that could compromise the impartial and objective performance of the Agreement. Such conflict of interests (as defined in Article 2.3, g) of the Regulations) could arise in particular as a result of economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties, or any other relevant connection or shared interest. Any conflict of interests which could arise during the performance of the Agreement must be notified to the other Party in writing without delay. In the event of such conflict, the Party concerned shall immediately take all necessary steps to resolve it.

13.2 Each Party reserves the right to verify that such measures are adequate and may require additional measures to be taken, if necessary, within a time limit which it shall set. The Parties shall ensure that their staff, board and directors are not placed in a situation which could give rise to conflict of interests. Each Party shall immediately replace any member of its staff exposed to such a situation.

Article 14 - Confidentiality

14.1 All information contained herein, as well as information which the Parties provide to each other for the fulfilment of the subject hereof during pre-contractual negotiations, or upon and after the conclusion hereof shall be deemed to be confidential, and neither Party shall disclose such information to a third party without the prior written consent of the other Party. The Parties agree to protect such information as their own, use it only in connection with the fulfilment of the subject hereof, not misuse it or allow third-party access to it.

Article 15 - Intellectual property rights

15.1 The Partner agrees to ensure that all relations with third parties involved in the implementation of the Project are settled in such a way to prevent those persons from

asserting any claims arising from their personal rights, copyrights or other intellectual property rights against the Project Promoter, the Programme Operator or other Authorised Persons pursuant to the Project Agreement. If the Partner does not grant its consent to the Project Promoter to use the work, in particular for making the work available to the public, this shall be deemed to be a breach of the terms and conditions of the provision of the Project Grant associated with an obligation to repay the Project Grant or a part thereof. The Partner also agrees to cover any potential damage to the Project Promoter that may arise due to a breach of the obligation under this paragraph.

15.2 The Partner undertakes to provide consultation services without any entitlement to remuneration for copyright. The Parties acknowledge that practical projects, tools, software applications and other programme solutions created in connection with the provision of consultation services may be subject to licensing conditions and copyright.

15.3 The Partner undertakes that before any acceptance, further development, sublicensing, or use related to the Project or a part thereof, it shall ensure unambiguous clarification of the status of copyrights and the settlement of all necessary legal obligations with relevant rights holders before any use of transfer.

15.4 The Partner undertakes to ensure that the Project Promoter is granted all necessary consent to make available to the public any work that the Partner creates in the course of the Project that is subject to copyright and was fully or partly financed from the project Grant with no territorial or material restrictions and no obligation to pay remuneration for such rights.

Article 16 – Liability

16.1 Each Party shall be responsible for due fulfilment of its obligations established hereby. The Parties shall not be responsible for any damages incurred by the other Party due to a breach of their obligations hereunder.

16.2 Neither of the Parties shall be responsible for a failure to fulfil its obligations hereunder resulting from a force majeure incident beyond its control which it could not have foreseen or avoided. Natural disasters, wars, terrorist attacks are deemed to be force majeure. A Party claiming a force majeure incident shall immediately notify the other Party of the occurrence of such an incident and make reasonable efforts to minimise its impact.

Article 17 – Irregularities

17.1 Irregularities are defined in accordance with Article 11.1 of the Regulations.

17.2 In case an irregularity has come to the attention of one Party that Party shall immediately inform the other Party thereof in writing.

17.3 In cases where measures to remedy any such irregularity are taken by the competent bodies referred to in Chapter 12 of the Regulations, including measures to recover funds, the Party concerned shall be solely responsible for complying with such measures and returning such funds to the Programme. The Partner shall, in such cases, return the recovered funds through the Project Promoter.

Article 18 – Suspension of payments and reimbursement

18.1 In cases where a decision to suspend payments and/or request reimbursement from the Project Promoter is taken by the Programme Operator or the Switzerland in line with the Article 12.2 of the Regulations, the Partner shall take such measures as are necessary to comply with the decision.

18.2 For the purposes of the previous paragraph, the Project Promoter shall, without delay, submit a copy of the decision referred to in the previous paragraph to the Partner.

Article 19 – Termination

19.1 The Parties have agreed that this Agreement may be terminated by agreement between the Parties if the Parties have mutually settled all their obligations hereunder or if there has not been even a partial provision of the Project Grant

19.2 Either Party may terminate this Agreement in the event of a breach by the other Party of its obligations 'A fundamental breach of obligations' means primarily being late in fulfilling an obligation or not providing due and timely performance of obligations under the Agreement, especially obligations under Articles 4 and 5 or the Legal Framework documents that the Party has undertaken to fulfil based on the provisions of the Agreement.

19.3 Furthermore, in case of termination of the Project Contract for any reason whatsoever, the Project Promoter may terminate this Agreement with immediate effect.

Article 20- Assignment

20.1 Neither Party shall have the right to transfer their rights and obligations under this Agreement without the prior consent of the other Party.

20.2 The Parties acknowledge that all assignment of rights and obligations under this Agreement is dependent upon the Programme Operator's prior consent in accordance with the provisions of the Project Contract

Article 21 – Amendments

21.1 Any amendment to this Agreement, including its Annexes, shall be the subject of a written agreement concluded by the Parties.

Article 22 – Severability

22.1 If any provision of this Agreement (or part of any provision) is found by any court, tribunal or other authority of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, illegal or unenforceable, that provision or part-provision shall, to the extent required, be deemed not to form part of the Agreement, and the validity and enforceability of the other provisions of the Agreement shall not be affected.

22.2 If a provision of this Agreement (or part of any provision) is found illegal, invalid or unenforceable, the Parties shall negotiate in good faith to amend such provision such that, as amended, it is legal, valid and enforceable and, to the greatest extent possible, achieves the Parties' original intent.

22.3 The Parties have agreed that in case this Agreement does not explicitly stipulate otherwise, the relationships which are not explicitly set in this Agreement shall be respectively governed by the provisions of the Legal Framework, the Support Measure Agreement and Project Contract.

Article 23 – Notices and language

23.1 All notices and other communications between the Parties shall be made in writing and be sent to the following addresses:

For the Project Promoter:



For the Partner:



23.2 The language governing the execution of this Agreement is English. All documents, notices and other communications foreseen in the framework of this Agreement shall be in English.

Article 24 – Governing law and settlement of disputes

24.1 The construction, validity and performance of this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the Slovak Republic. The Agreement must, however, be interpreted also in the light and in response to Project Contract, second Swiss Contribution Legal Framework and Implementation Rules.

24.2 Any dispute relating to the conclusion, validity, interpretation or performance of this Agreement shall be resolved amicably through consultation between the Parties.

24.3 If the Parties fail to resolve the dispute by mutual agreement or settlement, the dispute shall be promptly presented to the Programme Operator, who at its own discretion may convene a joint meeting of Programme Operator and the litigants, or the Programme Operator and all Parties to this Agreement, in order to resolve the dispute and reach an agreement out of court settlement. If the Programme Operator does not convene a joint meeting, or the Parties to the dispute, do not resolve the dispute in a joint meeting convened by the Programme Operator, pursuant to the preceding sentence, the dispute will be brought to the respective general court of the Slovak Republic.

Article 25 - Closing provisions

25.1 The Parties hereby declare that they have duly and carefully read this Agreement, understood its content and its legal effects, their intention expressed in this Agreement is free they conclude the Agreement neither in distress nor under notably inconvenient conditions, their contractual autonomy is not limited, contractual acts are sufficiently clear, precise and understandable, the signatories are duly authorised to sign this Agreement and as a sign of their consent they have signed the Agreement.

25.2 This Agreement has been executed in two counterparts, one of which shall be given to each party. The Parties' agreement on the number of counterparts shall not apply if the Agreement is concluded electronically.

25.3 The following Annexes form an inseparable part hereof

Annex 1 – List of activities

Annex 2 – Swiss partner budget

Annex 3 – Advance payment plan

Annex 4 – Project Interim Report/Payment claim

Annex 5 - Template for the report of a competent and independent public officer

For the Project Promoter

Daphne – Institute of Applied Ecology

Signed electronically

RNDr. Ján Šeffler, CSc.
Director

For the Partner

Bern University of Applied Sciences BFH - School of
Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL

Signed electronically

Prof. Dr. Thibault Lachat
Head of Forest Ecology Team

Prof. Dr. Bernhard Pauli
Director of Forest Sciences

Bilateral cooperation on forest habitat assessment and remote sensing methodology

This activity will be implemented by a Swiss expert partner - the Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH), Faculty of Agricultural, Forestry and Food Sciences (HAFL), Division of Forestry Sciences - who will contribute valuable expertise through the development of a common methodology for habitat quality assessment, field inventories as well as using classification of forest structures based on remote sensing data. This will serve as a basis for the identification of future Zone A and ecological "stepping stones" and the assessment of their ecological value and connectivity (activity a1). Steps are carried out in cooperation with DAPHNE, with on-site collaboration, workshops and documentation to ensure knowledge transfer.

Steps:

1. Collection and processing of appropriate remote sensing data for the whole area, including orthophotomaps, multispectral satellite imagery (Sentinel-2) and LiDAR data, as well as information from the Forestry Information System.
2. Segmentation of forest stands with homogeneous structure for the purpose of forest mosaic overview. This map can be used for further analysis (ecological value), forest planning and visitor information. Extraction of key attributes - dominant height, degree of cover, conifer/conifer ratio, vertical structure.
3. Segmentation and classification of forest habitats using machine learning methods (RF-Random Forest, SVM-Support Vector Machine or Deep Learning), in combination with data from the Forest Management Information System and field verification, enables the assessment of forest habitats. The main selection indicators include large tree canopy, mosaic and layered forest structure, species composition with the presence of native tree species and ecological connectivity with already preserved natural features in the area.
4. Development of a suitable methodology for in field assessment of ecological value and habitat quality, also in regard of the remote sensing outputs.

Calculation of vegetation indices (NDVI - Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, EVI - Enhanced Vegetation Index) to assess the vitality of forest stands and monitor their evolution over time. A long-term decline in these indices indicates reduced forest vigour. High EVI values indicate ecosystems with high biodiversity and occur where there is sufficient light.

Annex 2

Budget

Expenditure Item	Unit	Quantity	Unit Costs	Total Amount EUR	Total Amount CHF	Type of Expenditure	Activity	Incurring by	Comments	exchange rate
ECO/GIS Experts (Swiss partner)	set	1	115 000,00	115 000,00	109 523,81	Cost of staff assigned to the project	Bilateral cooperation	Partner2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ECO activities - field method of ecological quality, data management and analysis, species monitoring concept etc; •GIS activities - Data Acquisition and Preparation, Modeling of Old-Growth Patches, Stand map etc.; •Coordination and project management 	1,05
Travel (Swiss partner)	set	1	10 000,00	10 000,00	9 523,81	Travel and subsistence allowances for staff	Bilateral cooperation	Partner2	Swiss partner travel cost and subsistence allowance (transport, acomodation, food etc.) for the field visits/project meetings etc.	
Total				125 000,00	119 047,62					

**Expenditure
forecast**

Reporting period	From	To	Total EUR	Total CHF	Comments
1	1.8.2025	30.11.2025	-	-	
2	1.12.2025	31.3.2026	10 000,00	9 523,81	Kickoff of the project, preparation of methods
3	1.4.2026	31.7.2026	43 000,00	40 952,38	First visit, GIS/ECO Preparations/Concept
4	1.8.2026	30.11.2026	25 000,00	23 809,52	GIS Core Processing
5	1.12.2026	31.3.2027	17 000,00	16 190,48	GIS/ECO Preparations / Further Processing
6	1.4.2027	31.7.2027	20 000,00	19 047,62	Second visit, Finalization, Analyses
7	1.8.2027	30.11.2027	5 000,00	4 761,90	Exchange, Reports
8	1.12.2027	31.3.2028		-	
9	1.4.2028	31.7.2028		-	
10	1.8.2028	31.12.2028	5 000,00	4 761,90	Final Report

125 000,00 119 047,62

Report on regular activities for advance payment provision

Project Name: Support for ecological connectivity through biodiversity steppingstones in the forests of Slovak Paradise National Park

Reporting period: MM/YYYY – MM/YYYY

Responsible: Name Surname

1. Completed Activities Overview

- Activity name:
- Activity description:
- Activity outputs achieved:

2. Project Status

- Deviations from the plan and their reasons
- Status of budget implementation
- Possible financial problems or need for additional resources

3. Next Period Plan

- Planned activities with deadlines
- Expected outputs
- Identification of potential risks

Certification of costs claimed by project partner

We confirm that procedures have been performed in order to provide assurance as to the relevance and conformity with the Regulations on the implementation of the second Swiss Contribution to selected Member States of the European Union to reduce economic and social disparities within the European Union (the Regulations), national law and relevant national accounting practices of the costs claimed by the project partner.

Project reference:	<i>Fill in</i>
Project title:	<i>Fill in</i>
Project partner:	<i>Name of project partner</i>
Entity responsible for the certification:	<i>Name of entity</i>
Type of entity:	<i>Auditor or Competent Public Officer</i>
Start date of incurred expenditure:	<i>DD.MM.YYYY</i>
End date of incurred expenditure:	<i>DD.MM.YYYY</i>
Actual expenditure¹ incurred this period:	<i>Fill in</i>

The [Auditor/Competent Public Officer] hereby certifies that:

- (i) The costs claimed by the project partner are incurred in accordance with the Regulations².
- (ii) The cost claimed are incurred in accordance with the relevant law and national accounting practices.
- (iii) The [Auditor³/Competent Public Officer] has not been involved in the preparation of the relevant financial statements, and is independent of the donor project partner.

	For the Auditor/Competent Public Officer	Optional second signature
Name		
Signature		
Position		
Date		

¹ A breakdown of the costs certified should be provided as an annex

² Provisions on eligibility of expenditures are stated in chapter 8 of the Regulations

³ Auditor shall be qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents