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by e-mail

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Bern, 18 July 2024

**Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme
Decision Letter on 2nd stage Support Measure Proposal
Support Measure: Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity (BIO)
Swiss Contribution: CHF 38'400'000 CHF**

Dear Ms. Matyášová,

We would like to thank you for the submission on 14 June 2024 of the Support Measure Proposal (SMP) "Sustainable Tourism and Enhancing Biodiversity (BIO)" and are pleased to inform you that the **SECO Operations Committee (OPK) has approved the 2nd stage proposal of this SMP.**

Overall, the OPK praised the Support Measure, which has the potential to improve the sustainability of tourism and significantly strengthen biodiversity in national parks and landscape conservation areas, thereby contributing to the conservation of nature for future generations. It recognized the high quality and level of detail of the SMP, which describes the intervention logic, design and modalities of the SMP well. The planned interventions are need based and well anchored in national strategies.

The Committee discussed the SMP in detail and set the following conditions, which we kindly ask you to take into consideration as you implement the Support Measure:

1. It is necessary to undertake a further review of the **eligibility and selection criteria** with the aim to narrow them further down. The OPK appreciates the foreseen procedure, including the Steering Committee approving the "Call for Proposals" and "Assessment Criteria" documents. Please note that SECO intends to participate as part of the Swiss delegation at this first Steering Committee. The OPK also recognises the possibility for Switzerland to participate in the Evaluation Committee as an observer, as we would like to follow the selection process closely.
2. The **budget** contains minor factual errors and needs to be revised. In addition, the disbursement schedule needs to better reflect the expected timeline for the implementation of the SM and of the disbursements during the programme period (post 2024).



3. The OPK has expressed concerns about the **limited implementation time**, which is likely to make it challenging to implement larger infrastructure projects in particular. This constraint of the limited time-frame should be taken into account when defining the eligibility criteria for the selection of projects.
4. The OPK welcomes the intention to rely on the support of the **Swiss Parks Network** during the call for proposal-phase of the Support Measure. Funds from the Swiss Expert Partnership Fund (SEPF) are available for this purpose. It also strongly encourages the intention to engage in partnerships with Swiss institutions at project level, especially for the larger projects.
5. The **logframe** (especially the outcomes, outputs including the selection of indicators) as well as the annex of the SMP "Programme Component Characteristics" need to be refined and linked to the overall objectives of the Support Measure during the finalization of the selected proposals. The logframe should be approved by the Steering Committee.
6. The OPK takes note of the **risk assessment** contained in the SMP. It emphasises that the risk associated with the limited implementation time of large infrastructure projects should be taken into account as well, and adequate mitigation measures need to be defined (see above).
7. The OPK emphasises the importance of **integrating the Support Measure activities** into the government's broader environmental and tourism policies and of coordinating them with other activities and stakeholders.

The Committee praised the constructive and trusting cooperation between the NCU and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) with SECO and the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) in Prague. SECO as well as the SCO remain at your disposal to provide more detailed explanations if needed.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude for your strong commitment and cooperation in the preparation and implementation of the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme.

Yours sincerely,

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO
Economic Cooperation and Development

Werner Gruber
Head of Division a.i.
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