ANNEX II: TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION 2

1.1. Partner country 2

1.2. Contracting authority 2

1.3. Country background 2

1.4. Current situation in the sector 2

1.5. Related programmes and other donor activities 3

2. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS 3

2.1. Overall objective 3

2.2. Specific Objective(s) 3

2.3. Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor 3

3. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS 4

3.1. Assumptions underlying the project 4

3.2. Risks 4

4. SCOPE OF THE WORK 4

4.1. General 4

4.2. Specific work 4

4.3. Project management 8

5. LOGISTICS AND TIMING 8

5.1. Location 8

5.2. Start date & period of implementation of tasks 8

6. REQUIREMENTS 8

6.1. Staff 8

6.2. Office accommodation 9

6.3. Facilities to be provided by the contractor 9

6.4. Equipment 9

7. REPORTS 9

7.1. Reporting requirements 9

7.2. Submission and approval of reports 9

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION 10

8.1. Definition of indicators 10

8.2. Special requirements 10

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Partner country

Romania

## Contracting authority

MYNATURE Association, Răscoala din 1907 street, no. 12, Timișoara, Romania

## Country background

The Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme was the first Interreg IPA Programme, in the EU, to be approved by the European Commission, on the 19th of July 2022.

The Programme area includes three counties in Romania (Timiș, Caraș-Severin and Mehedinţi), as well as six districts in Serbia (Severno Banatski, Srednje Banatski, Južno Banatski, Braničevski, Borski și Podunavski).

In the 2021-2027 programming period, the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration is acting as Managing Authority for the Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme, which will have a total budget of **87.725.681 EUR** and will finance projects on environmental protection and adaptation to climate change, healthcare and education, tourism and culture and border management.

The funding for these priorities will be 85% from the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III), 13% Romanian state budget co-financing and 2% as own contribution of the Romanian beneficiaries. Serbian beneficiaries will provide 15% co-financing as their own contribution.

## Current situation in the sector

The protected area "Mlaștinile Satchinez" is a key wetland of ecological and connectivity importance. It is located in the western part of Romania, in the northern sector of Timiș County, at the intersection of the Pannonian Plain and the Banat region. Often referred to as the "Delta of Banat," this area is one of the last remaining wetland ecosystems in western Romania and holds multiple protection statuses: it is a natural reserve (RONPA0757), a Site of Community Importance (ROSCI0115), and a Special Protection Area (ROSPA0078), integrated into the European ecological network Natura 2000.

Situated approximately 25 km northwest of Timișoara, the largest city in western Romania, Mlaștinile Satchinez covers a mosaic of habitats: salt marshes, reed beds, meadows, shallow ponds, and temporary waters. These diverse environments support a wide variety of flora and fauna, many of them protected at national and European levels.

The wetland is of high conservation value due to its role as a breeding, resting, and feeding ground for over 100 bird species, including threatened or declining populations, such as *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Circus aeruginosus*, *Ardea purpurea, Aythya nyroca, Chlidonias hybrida, Himantopus himantopus, Porzana porzana,* *Egretta alba* etc. Because of this avifaunal richness, the area is part of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) network.

In addition to ornithological value, Mlaștinile Satchinez preserves remnants of halophytic steppe vegetation, making it a priority habitat under the Habitat Directive 92/43/EEC, specifically the habitat type 1530 – Pannonic salt steppes and salt marshes\*. This habitat type is endangered and of high biogeographical relevance, particularly in the context of the wider Pannonian region.

The ecological importance of the Satchinez wetlands goes beyond their borders, as they are strategically located near other protected natural areas in Romania and Serbia. These include the Lunca Mureșului Natural Park, Hunedoara Timișană, Sărăturile Diniaș, Lunca Timișului, Pădurea Macedonia, Lunca Bârzavei protected areas and, across the border, the Karaš–Nera Landscape of Exceptional Features (LEF Karaš–Nera), SNR Deliblatska Peščara, Ramsar area Labudovo okno. Further south, the Semenic – Cheile Carașului and Cheile Nerei – Beușnița National Parks, along with the Iron Gates Natural Park, represent key connectivity zones with natural areas in Serbia. Together, these sites form a transboundary ecological corridor that strengthens connectivity between the Carpathians and the Pannonian Plain, essential for migratory species and climate change adaptation.

The Mlaștinile Satchinez wetlands have been significantly shaped by human activities over the past century, leading to substantial alterations in hydrology, habitat structure, and biodiversity. Historically, extensive drainage works and the conversion of wetlands into agricultural land have fragmented natural habitats and reduced the ecological functionality of the area. Intensive farming, the use of pesticides, and water extraction have further degraded the quality of both soil and water, affecting sensitive species and limiting the natural regeneration of halophytic vegetation. Situated within a densely populated and agriculturally exploited region of western Romania, these pressures are part of broader landscape-scale impacts typical of the Pannonian Plain, including Hungary and Serbia. Despite its protected status, the site remains vulnerable to land-use changes, invasive species, and infrastructure development, underlining the need for integrated management and ecological restoration to preserve its ecosystem services and transboundary ecological connectivity.

Against the backdrop of continuously expanding agricultural lands and inhabited areas, the inventory and mapping of the remaining natural resources and ecosystem services becomes all the more important. The fluvial and marshland relief forms of Mlaștinile Satchinez continue to hold significant scientific, educational, recreational, and ecotourism value, offering opportunities for birdwatching, ecological research, and environmental education. The landscape of transboundary importance, shaped by centuries of human-nature interaction, underlines the necessity for integrated conservation and sustainable development in the region.

Recognized both nationally and internationally, Mlaștinile Satchinez plays a central role in the implementation of the national ecological network and contributes significantly to the Pan-European Green Infrastructure objectives. As pressures from agriculture and urban development increase, maintaining the ecological integrity and connectivity of this site is crucial for long-term biodiversity conservation in the cross-border Banat region.

## Related programmes and other donor activities

Not applicable.

# OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

Study regarding the natural resources evaluation and mapping and socio-economic features evaluation of the Satchinez Commune (Romania)

## Overall objective

The overall objective (Impact) to which this action contributes is :

The overall objective of the GREEN-PATH project is to contribute to the joint sustainable development of the local communities neighboring Mlaștina Satchinez and Karas-Nera NPAs, involving directly the local & regional stakeholders in planning and managing the environmental issues as: green infrastructure & habitats rehabilitation & accessibility, air & water quality monitoring, developing & promoting a Joint Strategy for pollution management, biodiversity & landscape conservation & the sustainable use of natural resources.

## Specific objective(s)

The contract should support MYNATURE Association and its partners in the process of implementation of project ”CBC Network for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources” financed under INTERREG-IPA CBC Romania-Serbia Programme by elaborating a *Study regarding the natural resources evaluation and mapping and socio-economic features evaluation of the Satchinez Commune* with all relevant information that will help to develop GREEN-PATH Joint strategy.

## Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor

The expected outputs of this contract are as follows:

* Study regarding the natural resources evaluation and mapping and socio-economic features evaluation of the Satchinez Commune

# ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

## Assumptions underlying the project

The Contractor must undertake the tasks within the project in accordance with this Term of Reference and according to best practices in the field.

## Risks

Not applicable.

# SCOPE OF THE WORK

## General

### Description of the assignment

This assessment, titled Study regarding the evaluation and mapping of natural resources and the socio-economic characteristics of Satchinez Commune, aims to identify and evaluate the existing natural resources within the commune and its protected areas, to analyze their current patterns of use, and to provide recommendations for their sustainable management.

Key Objectives and Subsections of the Study:

1. General Context and Study Area Overview
   * Geographic, administrative and environmental context
   * Overview of protected areas (Mlaștinile Satchinez – Nature Reserve, SCI, SPA)
   * Historical land use and landscape transformations
2. Inventory, Evaluation and Mapping of Natural Resources
   * Identification of existing natural resources (soil, water, vegetation, biodiversity)
   * Mapping of land cover and land use (including Corine Land Cover)
   * Analysis of ecosistems, habitat types and conservation status
   * Analysis of rare, protected or threatened species (flora and fauna)
3. Anthropogenic Pressures and Environmental Impacts
   * Land use changes (e.g., agricultural expansion, urbanization)
   * Pollution sources (agricultural runoff, waste, etc.)
   * Habitat fragmentation and hydrological alterations
   * Climate-related risks (e.g., drought, extreme weather)
4. Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Commune
   * Demographic structure and population trends
   * Main economic activities (agriculture, tourism, services)
   * Infrastructure and land ownership patterns
   * Dependency on and interaction with natural resources
5. Institutional and Legal Framework
   * National and EU-level policies relevant to conservation and resource use
   * Local governance structures and protected area management
   * Role of stakeholders and community involvement
6. Transboundary and Regional Ecological Connectivity
   * Ecological links with neighboring protected areas in Romania and Serbia
   * Role of the commune in green infrastructure and ecological corridors
   * Cartography: Ecological Connectivity / Blue-Green Infrastructure of the Satchinez Marshes in the Context of the Historical Banat Region, Including Vojvodina.
7. Recommendations and Strategic Guidelines
   * Proposals for conservation and restoration actions
   * Measures to enhance sustainable use of natural resources
   * Opportunities for local development based on natural resources
   * Integration of results into spatial planning and policy-making
8. Annexes and Supporting Materials
   * Maps, datasets, species lists, methodological notes
   * Photographic documentation and GIS outputs

### Geographical area to be covered

Satchinez Commune (Administrative-Territorial Unit), Romania.

### Target groups

Not relevant

## Specific work

Study development must include the following:

* The study will include both field and desk research to inventory and map the natural resources and socio-economic characteristics of Satchinez Commune. It will assess their current state in relation to historical land use, conservation status, and existing threats.
* A comprehensive valuation of natural resources will be carried out, resulting in a complete list and identification of the most important ones. These will be analyzed in both historical and spatial contexts, along with their interdependencies, links to stakeholders, management practices, and the legislative framework.
* Based on the findings, recommendations will be developed for the sustainable management and restoration of natural resources, including best practices, sustainable use options, and activities to be limited or avoided.
* The study will also provide guidance on how natural resources valuation can be used as a tool to engage local communities, particularly those near the Mlaștinile Satchinez protected area, with potential applicability across the wider cross-border region.
* In addition, the socio-economic and environmental analysis will support proposals for sustainable development measures tailored to local community needs.

Throughout all phases of contract implementation, the Contractor shall be required to communicate and consult with the working group designated by the Contracting Authority and to obtain approval for each component of the study/service provided. If the designated working group is not satisfied with the service delivered, no payment shall be approved by the Contracting Authority..

## Project management

### Responsible body

The Contractor is responsible for all the activities regarding this contract.

### Management structure

The person responsible for overseeing the implementation of tasks under this contract, on behalf of the Contracting Authority, is Mr. Adorian Ardelean, President of the NGO.

### Facilities to be provided by the contracting authority and/or other parties

The Contracting Authority will provide office space with an internet connection, when necessary, to facilitate meetings and presentations related to the service.

# LOGISTICS AND TIMING

## Location

Tasks related to this contract will be implemented in Timisoara/Satchinez, Timis County, Romania.

## Start date & period of implementation of tasks

The intended start date is 15.10.2025 and the period of implementation of the contract will be 5 months from this date. Please see Articles 19.1 and 19.2 of the special conditions for the actual start date and period of implementation.

# REQUIREMENTS

## Staff

Note that civil servants and other staff of the public administration of the partner country, or of international/regional organisations based in the country, shall only be approved to work as experts if well justified. The justification should be submitted with the tender and shall include information on the added value the expert will bring as well as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

### Key experts

**Key Expert 1: Team Leader – Natural Resources Expert**

Qualifications and Skills

* University degree in Biology, Ecology, Life Sciences or a related field.

General Professional Experience

* Minimum of 5 years of relevant professional experience.

Specific Professional Experience

* At least 5 years of academic and/or research experience, demonstrated through involvement in scientific studies, research papers, and projects.
* Demonstrated expertise in natural resource inventory and mapping.

**Key Expert 2: Geospatial Expert**

Qualifications and Skills

* University degree in Geography, Geoinformatics, Environmental Sciences, or a related field.
* Proficiency in relevant GIS software (e.g., ArcGIS, QGIS) and tools for spatial data analysis and visualization.

General Professional Experience

* Minimum of 5 years of professional experience in the field of geospatial analysis, cartography, or spatial data management.

Specific Professional Experience

* At least 5 years of proven experience in GIS-based analysis, including spatial data processing, thematic mapping, remote sensing, and geostatistical interpretation.
* Demonstrated experience in projects related to natural resource management, environmental monitoring, protected areas, or land use planning.

**Key Expert 3: Socio-economic Expert**

Qualifications and Skills

* At least a Bachelor's degree (BSc) in Geography, Social Sciences, Economics, or a related field.

General Professional Experience

* Minimum of 3 years of relevant professional experience.

Specific Professional Experience

* At least 3 years of experience in national and/or international projects related to socio-economic development, regional planning, or community-based research.

Important Note: one Key expert may cover one or more required positions if satisfy specific professional experience.

All experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they take on.

### Other experts, support staff & backstopping

CVs for experts other than the key experts should not be submitted in the tender but the tenderer will have to demonstrate in their offer that they have access to experts with the required profiles. The contractor shall select and hire other experts as required according to the needs. The selection procedures used by the contractor to select these other experts shall be transparent, and shall be based on pre-defined criteria, including professional qualifications, language skills and work experience.

The costs for backstopping and support staff, as needed, are considered to be included in the tenderer's financial offer.

## Office accommodation

Office accommodation for each expert working on the contract is to be provided by the contractor.

## Facilities to be provided by the contractor

The contractor shall ensure that experts are adequately supported and equipped. In particular it must ensure that there is sufficient administrative, secretarial and interpreting provision to enable experts to concentrate on their primary responsibilities. It must also transfer funds as necessary to support their work under the contract and to ensure that its employees are paid regularly and in a timely fashion.

## Equipment

**No** equipment is to be purchased on behalf of the contracting authority / partner country as part of this service contract or transferred to the contracting authority / partner country at the end of this contract. Any equipment related to this contract which is to be acquired by the partner country must be purchased by means of a separate supply tender procedure.

# REPORTS

## Reporting requirements

The contractor will submit the following reports in English in one original:

* **Initial Report** outlining the methodology may be delivered at the end of the first month of the contract.
* **Interim Report** The contractor will prepare interim reports on the implementation of the tasks, at the 3rd month of contract service implementation. The report shall contain a sufficiently detailed description of the different options to support an informed decision on service performed. The interim reports report must be provided along with the corresponding invoice. The approval of the interim report by the Contracting Authority will be the basis for issuing interim payment as indicated in the Special Conditions.
* **Final report** The contractor will prepare final report on the implementation of the tasks, at the end of this contract. The report shall contain a sufficiently detailed description of the different options to support an informed decision on service performed. The final report must be provided along with the corresponding invoice. The approval of the final report by the Contracting Authority will be the basis for issuing final payment as indicated in the Special Conditions.

## Submission and approval of reports

The report referred to above must be submitted to the project manager identified in the contract. The project manager is responsible for approving the reports.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## Definition of indicators

The indicator of the successful implementation of the contract is “Services provided in timely, quality and quantity manor, as required in these Terms of Reference”.

## Special requirements

Not applicable