



**The Head Office / Secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South-Eastern Europe (SWG) – Skopje is looking for a Project Assistant for Regional Soil Partnership who will be engaged for the following responsibilities and tasks:**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Project Assistant for Regional Soil Partnership**

#### **1. Introduction**

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG), as a platform for networking and regional co-operation, has been established during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2005 (“Rural Development Opportunities for Co-operation in the SEE”) held in North Macedonia and Serbia in June 2005.

With the International Agreement in March 2009, the SWG is registered as an International Intergovernmental Organization, with its managing and coordinative body – SWG Head Office/Secretariat based in Skopje, North Macedonia. On September 7<sup>th</sup> 2009, the Law on Ratification of the SWG Agreement has been decisively completed by the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The main SWG strategic framework is composed of the following elements:

*SWG vision* is to promote innovative and sustainable agriculture and rural development through regional cooperation, to improve rural livelihoods in the SEE countries.

*Mission* - to increase horizontal cooperation among respective countries and territories of South Eastern Europe, by coordinating regional initiatives related to agriculture and rural development and supporting the process of social and economic development of rural areas in SEE region.

*General objective* of SWG is to facilitate close cooperation between the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support EU integration in SEE. The SWG has *four specific objectives* on which the organization has focused its work:

- To improve the common understanding on agriculture and rural development policies;
- To assist the improvement of implementing structures and systems for agriculture and rural development, with specific emphasis on cross border cooperation;
- To improve the understanding and use of implementation tools for agriculture and rural development;
- To identify and share information and application of good practice in agriculture and rural development to broaden the rural agenda.

#### **2. Background of the Western Balkan Soil Partnership**

There are several targets set out by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that require sustainable soil use and management and improvement of soil health. The essential role of soils for sustainable food production, biodiversity preservation (healthy ecosystems) and human health based on the paradigm of One Health concept make them crucial to reach these targets. Moreover, climate change actions like mitigation and adaptation along with dealing with water security is deeply anchored in the European Green Deal. Inspired by these goals, for the first time, this partnership will address these common challenges for the Western Balkan region based on principle of knowledge



sharing and active participation. Specifically, the partnership will contribute to fulfil the targets of the Action Plan for the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (2021-2030).

The partnership will accomplish its goals through cross-regional cooperation and information exchange, targeted to strengthen national agricultural and environmental policies objectives in the light of EU policy developments in the topic of soils (such as the European Green Deal, EU Soil Strategy 2030 with proposed EU Soil Health Law, Soil Deal for Europe).

The Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of the Western Balkan Soil Partnership was signed during the Ministerial Meeting in Budva, Montenegro in November 2022.

### **3. Tasks of the Project Assistant for Western Balkan Soil Partnership**

For its regular operation SWG Secretariat is looking to hire a Project Assistant for Western Balkan Soil Partnership

#### **Reporting Lines**

The Project Assistant for Western Balkan Regional Soil Partnership (WBRSP) will report to the SWG Secretary General, SWG Senior Project Manager and Western Balkan Regional Soil Partnership.

#### **Technical focus**

Under the overall guidance of the SWG secretariat the WBRSP Project Assistant will lead all aspects related to the coordination of the work of the future Technical Secretariat (TS) of the WBRSP, and the activities of various working groups (including REAWG on Soil), to facilitate communication between the partner countries and the experts within the network and keep track records for all activities and deliverables and to ensure dissemination of all outputs among the stakeholders. WBRSP Project assistant will be involved in EU funded HUMUS Project activities.

#### **Key Functions**

Plans, manage, and facilitate activities of the Technical Secretariat and the Working Groups, Coordinates and technically supports regular meetings and workshops of the Technical Secretariat, Scientific committee, and Working group activities. Participates in the identification and analysis of the requirements of various funds, donors, or other funding opportunities, and supports the process of Project Proposals Development

Responsible for all aspects of the administration of the WBRSP work and regular reporting

#### **Specific functions**

Collaborates and provides technical backstopping to all technical activities of the working groups of the WBRSP ensures the quality of the delivered output and participates in capacity development and knowledge sharing,

Participate in the collection and harmonization of regional and global soil data and other environmental variables,

Participate in the development of the WBRSP digital database and its maintenance

**The candidate will be assessed against the following criteria**



### Minimum requirements

- Advanced university degree in agricultural and/or soil science, land and natural resources management, or related field.
- Relevant experience in agricultural soil science, digital soil mapping, agriculture and natural resources management, or related field.
- Working knowledge of English (proficient – level) and one of the regional languages Serbian-Bosnian-Macedonian-Montenegrin

### Competences

Organizational Skills

Communication

Leading

### Technical/Functional Skills

- Extent of experience in technical coordination and management of work groups for specific activities and knowledge of soil resources assessment/management,
- Experience in analyzing land/soil management and soil mapping-related issues,
- Ability to participate and support project management, budgets, and human resources efficiently,
- Ability to organize and facilitate regional meetings, seminars, workshops, and training courses,
- Relevance of academic background,
- Ability to mobilize resources and partnerships for delivering programmatic initiatives at scale,
- Experience in dealing with government officials, development partners, and other country stakeholders,
- Extent of oral and written communication and negotiation skills,
- In possession of a driving licence (B category).

### 4. Place of assignment

The position will be located in in Skopje with responsibilities spanning over the entire Western Balkans region. The duty assumes frequent travel in the Western Balkans region and beyond.

### 5. Timeframe

This position requires a full-time engagement. The engagement will start in February 2024 and will last until end of 2024 with possibility for annual extension.

### 6. Working language

The official working language of the SWG Secretariat is English.

### 7. Application

**Please send your CV and cover letter by February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 on the following email address: [swgmgmt@swg-seerural.org](mailto:swgmgmt@swg-seerural.org) stating the position: Project Assistant for Western Balkan Regional Soil Partnership in the subject line.** No telephone calls will be accepted!

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.