

Interreg



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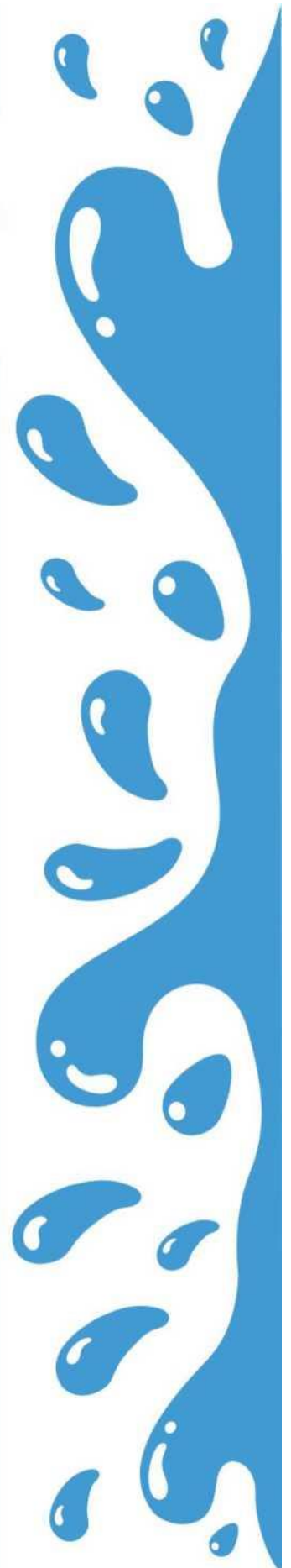
NEXT Black Sea Basin

TERMS OF REFERENCE



External Assessors Second Calls for proposals

www.blacksea-cbc.net



1. BACKGROUND

The Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme is an EU cooperation programme between EU Member States with neighbouring countries/regions along the EU external borders.

The Programme eligible area involves eight countries, some of them including their whole national territory (Armenia, Georgia and Republic of Moldova), while the others include those regions closest to the Basin (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine).

The Programme aims to strengthen existing links between participating countries and build new ones in the fields of research and innovation, environmental protection and actions for a competent and resilient region. Its goal is to establish long-lasting transnational links within the Black Sea Basin by financing projects which should deliver clear transnational cooperation impact and benefits, and which demonstrate sustainability of their actions, and synergies and complementarities with other actions in the same field.

Detailed information about the Programme priorities and objectives is available at the following link: <https://blacksea-cbc.net/interreg-next-bsb-2021-2027/priorities-and-objectives>

2. PURPOSE

The scope of the selection of the external assessors is to support the Assessment Working Group (AWG) in the qualitative evaluation (strategic and operational) of applications submitted within the second call for proposals under the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

The second calls for proposals within the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme (for regular projects and for small scale projects) was launched on 29 March 2024, with deadline for submission of proposals on 28 June 2024.

The submitted applications will be examined and evaluated by the National Authorities and Joint Secretariat (JS) with the support of external assessors, as follows:

1. **administrative and eligibility compliance check** - to be carried out by assessors nominated from the Joint Secretariat own staff and National Authorities representatives;
2. **quality assessment (strategic and operational)** - to be carried out by external assessors, in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in Annex 7 - Quality Assessment Grid to the Application Packs for small scale and regular projects and with the Guidelines for Assessment and Selection of Applications.

In order to perform the quality assessment of the applications submitted in the framework of the 2nd Calls for Proposals (for regular projects and for small scale projects), it is envisaged to **set up a group of minimum 14 external assessors**. A reserve list shall be established and the number of external assessors may be increased in accordance with the number of applications to be assessed.

In this respect, the Joint Secretariat (JS) within South East Regional Development Agency (SERDA) invites the interested candidates to submit their applications in compliance with the requirements mentioned below.

3. TASK

The main task of each external assessor is to undertake a quality assessment (strategic and operational) of applications submitted under the 2nd Calls for Proposals (for regular projects and for small scale projects) of the INTERREG NEXT BSB and to fill in the assessment Grids, accordingly.

Assessment of applications shall be made exclusively online, by using the electronic monitoring system of the Programme (JeMS), on the basis of information included by applicants in the application forms, in English language and in time frame allocated by the coordinator of the assessment process.

An online briefing meeting including a training session on how to perform the assessment in JeMS during the quality assessment process shall be provided to all assessors, before starting the assessment process. Moreover, throughout the entire assessment process, if needed, the JS will provide support regarding JeMS to all assessors.

The quality assessment (strategic and operational) of applications will be carried out by two assessors, in English language, in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the Quality Assessment Grid (Annex 7 to the Application Packs -<https://blacksea-cbc.net/interreg-next-bsb-2021-2027/calls-for-proposals/second-call-for-proposals>) and with the Guidelines for Assessment and Selection of Applications for the second call, which provides detailed instructions on how to score and to assess using the JeMS.

Based on the JeMS access rights, each assessor will independently carry out the assigned duties, performing cross-checks of the information included in the application forms (correlation between different sections and its annexes, as applicable).

External Assessors have to appraise each sub-criterion with a score, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the application, strongly and clearly justifying the score awarded and providing assessment conclusions per each criterion. External assessors are expected to give comments on each criterion and in their comments, explicitly refer to the elements of analysis under the relevant criteria. The comments on each criterion have to reflect and justify the score given. In the comments, assessors must highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

As their comments will be used to provide feedback to applicants, External assessors **must draft their comments in English** and must pay particular attention to **clarity, consistency and appropriate level of detailing**.

The comments and recommendations provided shall be concise, clear, observing the proportionality in terms of activities versus efficient financial management, and Grids containing expressions like *"it seems that ..., it looks like..., project activities could lead to ..., it is possible to reach the outcome or results, the project budget seems to be overestimated etc."* will not be accepted by the coordinator of the assessment process.

In case of recommending an application for funding, also recommendations for necessary amendments during the contracting phase should be provided if necessary.

In case of insufficient information for a correct qualitative assessment, clarifications shall be asked, through the coordinator of the assessment process.

External assessors have to ensure their availability to review their assessments in the following indicative, but non exhaustive cases:

- comments do not correspond to scores given in evaluation grid (incoherence);

- assessment grids contain formulation or expressions which are vague, as indicated as examples in the previous paragraph;
- the comments and recommendations do not sufficiently justify the awarded score(s);
- discrepancies, including contradictory comments between the two evaluation grids of the same application;
- failure to apply the assessment rules established in the Guidelines for Assessment and Selection of Applications and/or Guidelines for Grant Applicants;
- grids are of low quality showing superficial consideration of the application.

If an applicant appeals against the quality assessment result, the analysis and resolution of those appeals will be concluded according to the provisions of the Application Packs and Guidelines for Assessment and Selection of Applications.

4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

In carrying out the evaluation, the external assessors must:

- have good knowledge of the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme and its thematic fields (<https://blacksea-cbc.net/interreg-next-bsb-2021-2027/programme-documents>), the Application Packs (<https://blacksea-cbc.net/interreg-next-bsb-2021-2027/calls-for-proposals/second-call-for-proposals>);
- have good knowledge of the Guidelines for Assessment and Selection of Applications (which shall be provided by the JS at the beginning of the assessment process);
- follow the instructions provided in the Guidelines for assessment and selection of applications and of the coordinator of the assessment process;
- use the JeMS and assess the applications according to the Quality Assessment Grid, as annexed to the Application Packs;
- know the content and structure of the application form;
- comply with the rules defined by the Programme for ensuring the impartiality, confidentiality and avoidance of conflict of interest of the evaluation process. Assessors must be aware that failure to comply with these rules shall result in exclusion from the assessment process;
- immediately inform the coordinator of the assessment process if during the evaluation, she/he discovers being directly or indirectly connected with an application, which she/he has been asked to evaluate and which impairs her/his impartiality;
- follow the deadlines for finalizing the evaluation of the assigned applications;
- be available (by video conferencing platforms, email or phone) for the Assessment Working Group, Monitoring Committee meetings if further explanations on their works are required.

External assessors must ensure reliability and commitment to deliver high quality outputs in due time.

Each candidate shall submit, together with his/her CV and supporting documents (please see annexes), a **Declaration of Availability (Annex 1 to this ToR)** stating that the tasks to be performed have been understood by the candidate and that he/she is available for the job and committed to deliver the tasks in time.

Candidates should also be aware of the provisions of the **Declaration of Impartiality, Confidentiality and Avoidance of Conflict of Interest**, which will have to be signed before starting the evaluation. (Annex 2 to this ToR).

5. EXTERNAL ASSESSORS' PROFILE

External assessors should meet the following requirements:

- a university level degree certified by a diploma or other document with the same legal value issued by the authorities of the State of domicile or residence;
- experience in performing quality assessment (strategic and operational or equivalent - e.g. relevance, coherence, technical, financial assessment, etc) of project proposals under national, European or international funding programmes. The proof of experience will be based on relevant information included in the Curriculum Vitae. Please be aware that relevant documents regarding previous concluded service contracts, recommendations or any other similar documents issued by final beneficiaries of contracts or employer, which confirms the required experience will be asked by SERDA-JS before signing the work contract and in case they are not available, SERDA reserves the right to no longer sign the contract with the respective assessor;
- very good command of English language (written, spoken);
- computer skills.

The above criteria are cumulative and shall be proved by professional experience and studies, as presented in the Europass format CV and supporting documents (Annex 4 to this ToR).

6. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Interested applicants shall submit the following documents (PDF format) **by email, starting with 12th of August 2024 until 2nd of September 2024:**

- **Resume (CV)** (using the Europass format) - in English language (PDF format) - please provide in your CV information related to assessment processes (please see the understanding of process written at 7 - Recruitment process) in which you have been involved (e.g. name of programme, year of the call); the assessors must also include in their CVs information related to the number of assessment processes in a transnational/interregional/cross-border cooperation programmes; the CV will also include contact information of at least 2 persons that might be contacted for information related to your past experience in assessment processes.
- **Declaration of Availability** - signed (PDF format) - See attached template (Annex 1 to this ToR);
- Valid identity document and marriage certificate, if applicable, if the name is changed;
- **Declaration of the applicant regarding personal data** - template in English language provided, signed (handwritten or electronically) - (Annex 3 to this ToR).
- **Professional Experience** - See attached template (Annex 4 to this ToR);

All documents listed above should be sent by e-mail to the following e-mail address: **recruitment@adrse.ro.**

Please be aware that in case of identifying false information in your CV at a possible verification of the information contained, you will be excluded from the selection/recruitment process.

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS IS 2nd OF SEPTEMBER 2024. This deadline may be extended in order to have a sufficient number of applications which could allow the selection/recruitment of high quality and experienced assessors. In case the deadline will be extended, the information will be posted on the Programme website www.blacksea-cbc.net. Nevertheless, please consider **2nd of September 2024** as deadline for submitting the applications.

Only applications received by the deadline set in this announcement will be further evaluated. Thus, you must ensure that the email with your application is received in due time.

Each application submitted within the deadline will receive a registration number, and in order to comply with the legislation on personal data, it will be used throughout the selection/recruitment process of external assessor.

7. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The selection of external assessors is carried out by a committee established by Decision of the Director of SERDA, based on the registration files submitted within the deadline specified in the announcement. Only applicants who meet the cumulative selection criteria described below in this document will be selected.

The selection process shall consist of:

1. Selection of CVs

The CVs and supporting documents submitted (according to the list in the Application procedure) shall be examined in order to assess the compliance with the requirements.

External assessors will be selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- a) The number of quality assessment processes in which they have been involved as project assessor, under national, European or international funding programmes;
- b) The number of quality assessment processes in transnational/interregional/cross-border cooperation programmes as project assessor.

A quality assessment process under a programme (national, European or international funding programme) should be understood as strategic and operational assessment (or equivalent - e.g. relevance, coherence, technical, financial assessment, etc) of one or several projects submitted under a unique call for proposals or covered by a service contract.

For criterion a), the assessors must include in their CVs information related to the number of assessment processes. The number of processes will be scored by using the following method: for 2 processes - 1 point; for 3 processes - 2 points; for 4 processes - 3 points etc.

For criterion b), the candidates must include in their CVs information related to the number of assessment processes in a transnational/interregional/cross-border cooperation programme. The number of processes in transnational/interregional/cross-border cooperation programmes will receive

additional points by using the following method: for 2 processes - 1 point; for 3 processes - 2 points; for 4 processes - 3 points etc.

The final score will be calculated by adding the total number of points received for criteria a and b.

The first **28 external assessors** who will receive the highest number of points will be contacted by SERDA and will be invited to the interview, by e-mail sent to the addresses indicated in the CVs. Less than 28 assessors might be invited to the interview, if the qualification criteria were not fulfilled or interest in the recruitment process was low.

Any rejected applicant may submit a written complaint by e-mail to the address recruitment@adrse.ro, within 2 working days from the date of the email announcing the decision of SERDA.

2. The interview

As a result of the selection of the applicants from the **first phase** (selection of CVs), each applicant declared admitted will be informed by e-mail sent to the address communicated in the CV regarding the day and time established by the employer when the interview will be held, as **second phase**.

The interview will be held ONLINE, in English language.

Before starting the interview, each applicant will be informed that the interview is recorded and everyone will give their verbal agreement on this issue.

Applicants will take the responsibility for ensuring the technical conditions for conducting the interview. SERDA does not assume the responsibility for any technical problems of the applicant in order to access the online platform.

The interview's duration is approximately 30 minutes for each applicant. Connecting with a delay of more than 10 minutes from the time set and communicated to each applicant by e-mail sent to the address indicated in the CV leads to the elimination of the applicant. Interruption during the online interview for more than 10 minutes leads to the elimination of the applicant.

Before starting the interview, SERDA will verify by video the identity of each applicant by requesting them to present the identification documents.

The interview will take place online, on the Webex platform, accessing the link that will be sent on the e-mail of each applicant, at the date and time set by SERDA.

The interview will have the scope to assess the knowledge of each candidate and his/her relevance for the position (professional experience, English language).

The online interview will be structured in 2 sections, as follows:

Section 1 „Knowledge regarding the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme and its thematic fields”
- the score obtained (maximum 100 points) in this section counts for 60% of the total score.

Section 2 - the score obtained in this section counts for 40% of the total score.

Sub-sections:

Communication skills - maximum 50 points

Knowledge of English language - maximum 50 points

The score obtained in section 2 (maximum 100 points) represents the sum of the points obtained for the 2 sub-sections assessed.

The total score consists of:

- 60%: the score obtained for section 1;
- 40%: the score obtained for section 2.

All applicants shall be scored for the interview. Maximum score is 100, passing score is 50.

The final ranking of the applicants will be established as follows:

- The ranking will be **calculated in the descending** order of the score obtained.
- The applicants who obtained a score less than 50 points shall be rejected.

The first 14 experts will be contacted for starting the recruitment process and also a reserve list will be set up, with the candidates that had more than 50 points.

The applicants will be informed on the results of the interview by e-mail, according to the indicative timetable.

Any rejected applicant may submit a written complaint by e-mail to the address recruitment@adrse.ro, within 2 working days from the date of the e-mail announcing the decision of SERDA.

The appeals submitted are analysed by the appeals committee, established by Decision of the Director of SERDA.

The assessment work of project applications is envisaged to start in October 2024 and end in March 2025. Please note that the above-mentioned timeline is indicative.

8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST, IMPARTIALITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

To ensure the independence of the quality assessment performed, the external assessors will have to sign a **Declaration of Impartiality, Confidentiality and avoidance of Conflict of Interest** and that she/he commits to inform the coordinator of the assessment process if any conflict should arise during the assessment phase. A conflict of interest exists if the impartial and objective function of an assessor is jeopardized due to reasons involving family, economic interest or any other pecuniary interest shared with the applicants. Throughout the assessment process the assessors must ensure the confidentiality of the information and documents as provided by the MA/JS. This shall be certified by the selected assessor by signing a declaration - **see template attached (Annex 2 to this ToR)**.

9. TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

a. Type of contract

External assessors shall perform their tasks in the framework of full-time labour contracts concluded with SERDA, as Joint Secretariat, under the Romanian law. The labour contracts will have 6 months duration, starting October 2024 (indicatively). If needed, according with the workload, the contract duration may be extended with a number of days/months necessary for finalizing the quality assessment.

These Terms of Reference shall be annexed to the labour contract.

b. Location

The work shall be performed remotely, online.

External assessors must use functional laptops/desktops of their own. As the assessors will work remotely, he/she will be responsible to ensure from own resources all conditions necessary to perform the evaluation process.

c. Monthly salary and instalment payment

The labour contract shall be concluded in Romanian Lei (RON) and the monthly amount of the contract shall be the equivalent of 2,800 Euro (taxes included) (approximately 1,600 Euro net) at the exchange rate of the European Commission applicable in the month the labour contract is concluded (the monthly exchange rates of the European Commission are published on:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm).

The amount is fixed and is not subject to any negotiation with the Employer.

The monthly salary payment will be made in the employee's account in RON or in EURO.

If the payment is made in EURO, the currency conversion from RON to EURO will be made for each payment at the official exchange rate communicated by the Romanian National Bank from the date of payment.

The external assessor shall bear any fees charged by the Bank where the account has been opened for the receipt of the net amounts related to the services provided.

Upon the request of the Joint Secretariat (SERDA) for the participation of the assessors in the meetings held in Romania or another Programme country, the Joint Secretariat will cover their transport, accommodation allowance and daily allowance.

d. Specific terms of employment

d.1) The selected assessors from EU countries and from non-EU countries, the labour contract shall be signed after the submission of the following documents:

- Passport - in copy;
- A certificate for recognition of studies shall be issued by the National Ministry of Education of Romania. If the case may be, selected assessors should prepare a set of documents to be submitted to the National Ministry of Education. SERDA shall assist them in submitting the documents and getting the certificate of recognition of studies. Please note that the procedures of recognition and equivalence of bachelor diplomas does not apply to diplomas obtained in well-known, prestigious universities (please consult the list of well-known, prestigious universities, attached herewith);
- Medical certificate issued by an occupational health medical practitioner stating that the respective person is clinically healthy and capable of work and has no record of chronic and neuropsychological diseases - authorized English translation
- Criminal record - authorized English translation

- The individual labour contract shall be signed with the respective assessor. The execution of tasks may start immediately after the signature of the labour contract;

For the fulfillment of the tax obligations on the Romanian territory and the payment of the salary, SE RDA, as employer, will take the necessary steps in order to obtain the Tax Identification Number, after the signature of the labour contract. For the submission of the tax registration declaration, the employees must submit the following: e-mail address, copy of identity document (showing date and place of birth, current domicile), postal code.

IMPORTANT!!

In the absence of the Tax Identification Number, no payments can be made by SERDA to the assessors.

IMPORTANT!!

The employment of Ukrainian citizens will be done in compliance with the Romanian legislation in force, meaning that Ukrainian citizens are automatically entitled to residence permits and in order to be employed, the only requirement will be to obtain the individual identification code.

d.2) For Romanian citizens or for other citizens with legal working rights in Romania, the labour contract shall be signed after the submission of the following documents:

- Identity Card - in copy;
- Medical certificate issued by an occupational health medical practitioner stating that the respective person is clinically healthy and capable of work and has no record of chronic and neuropsychological diseases.
- University diploma - in copy
- Criminal record.

10. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE FOR SELECTION

	DATE	TIME
Deadline for submission of job applications (CVs and supporting documents) by email	02.09.2024	23:59 hrs. (Romania time)
Information by e-mail about the results of the selection of CVs	09.09.2024	23:59 hrs. (Romania time)
Submitting the complaints regarding the results of the selection of CVs	10-11.09.2024	23:59 hrs. (Romania time)
Analysis of complaints and communication of results	16.09.2024	

Interview*	17.09.2024	N/A
Information by e-mail about the results of the interview	23.09.2024	23:59 hrs. (Romania time)
Submitting the complaints regarding the results of the interview	24-25.09.2024	N/A
Analysis of complaints and communication of results	30.09.2024	23:59 hrs. (Romania time)

ANNEX 1

DECLARATION OF AVAILABILITY

I,, the undersigned, hereby declare that I agree to candidate for the selection of external assessors within Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

I further declare that I am able and willing to work for the period foreseen for the position for which my CV has been included if I will be selected as external assessor. I understood my responsibilities and I commit to deliver the tasks in time.

I am fully aware that if I do not fulfill the tasks assigned according to the signed labour contract, I will be excluded from the group of the external assessors for performing the quality assessment (strategic and operational) of the project proposals submitted in the framework of the second Calls for Proposals of the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

Date

Name and Signature¹

¹ Electronic signature is also accepted

DECLARATION OF

IMPARTIALITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND AVOIDANCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST - to be filled in by the assessor for the Quality Assessment)

(INTERREG VI-B) NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

Second call for proposals - Regular/Small scale projects

I, the undersigned, as **assessor for the Quality Assessment**, declare on my own responsibility and in the limit of the information I detain, under the sanction of false in declarations, that **I am not** in any of the situations below:

- I have been involved in drawing up the application form, study related to the application form that will be/was assessed;
- I hold social parts, interest parts or shares of the subscribed capital of the consulting office/firm that has drawn up the application form that is to be/was assessed or of the project lead partner and his partners' or entities affiliated to them;
- I am part of the managing board /management or supervision body of the consulting office/firm that has drawn up the application form that is to be/was assessed or of the project lead partner and his partners' or entities affiliated to them;
- I am the spouse, relative or in-law, up to the second degree inclusively, of persons that are part of the managing board / management bodies or that hold social parts, interest parts or shares of the subscribed capital of the project manager's or his partners';
- I am the spouse, relative or in-law, up to the second degree inclusively, of the legal representative/contact person of entities holding the quality of lead partner and/or his partners in the project or entities affiliated to them;
- I am the legal representative/ an employee of the project lead partner and/or one of his partner's or entities affiliated to them;
- I can have a pecuniary personal interest which could influence the objective fulfilling of the attributions I have within the evaluation process;
- I am employed or contracted² by a lead partner or lead beneficiary or by a project partner of an application submitted under the (INTERREG VI-B) NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme;

² As staff member, expert, etc.

- I have an interest of nature to affect my impartiality during the assessment process of the application form that is to be/was assessed.

At the same time, I commit myself to keep confidentiality of the application contents and of the documents submitted for evaluation, as a whole and by components, as well as on other information presented by the applicant that I will take contact with, whose disclosure may impair the right of the designer and/or applicant to protect its intellectual property and/or commercial secrets.

In case I will identify a situation of conflict of interest after signing the present declaration, I commit myself to immediately inform the coordinator and withdraw from the assessment process of the respective application.

Date

Name and Signature³

³ Electronic signature is also accepted

DECLARATION OF PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

Background:

South East Regional Development Agency-SERDA acting as Joint Secretariat for Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme is a processor which processes personal data on behalf of the controller Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, acting as Managing Authority for Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

Personal Data collection, processing and storage are performed according to the provisions of the Regulation No 679/2016 for the purpose of programme implementation by taking all technical and organisational measures necessary in order to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of personal data.

Personal data represent the information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person, as defined for the purposes of Regulation No 679/2016, art4 (1). East Regional Development Agency acting as Joint Secretariat processes the following personal data of applicants for employment: name and surname, date of birth, address of permanent residence, telephone number, email address, education and qualifications.

Under Article 7(3), data subjects have the right to withdraw consent at any time. The request will be addressed by email at: office@bsb.adrse.ro.

The personal data are processed solely for the purposes of the performance, management and monitoring of programme by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat and may also be passed to the bodies in charge with monitoring or inspection tasks according to Article 33 of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 897/2014 of 18 August 2014 laying down specific provisions for the implementation of cross-border cooperation programmes financed under Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument or any bodies/entities authorised by the Managing Authority.

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that by submitting my application for the job vacancy in the Joint Secretariat for Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme, I consent to have my personal data collected and processed by South East Regional Development Agency-SERDA.

Further, if I will be invited to the online interview, I hereby give my consent for audio and video recording.

Date

Name and Signature⁴

⁴ Electronic signature is also accepted

ANNEX 4

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

POSITION: EXTERNAL ASSESSOR

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that all the information and documents supporting them included in this annex are related to the information included in the CV attached.

Programme name	Type of program(1)	Number of assessment processes	Supporting documents (2)

(1)Type of program

A= national, European or international funding programmes;

B = transnational/interregional/cross-border cooperation programmes

(2) supporting documents can be: service contract, work contract, letter of recommendation from the final beneficiary, letter of acceptance of services provided issued from the final beneficiary, or other equivalent documents. Please be noted that these documents will be requested to be provided before signature of the work contract and failure to provide them within the date set by SERDA will lead to no further conclusion of the contract.

Date

Name and Signature⁵

⁵ Electronic signature is also accepted