



Call for proposals under the Polish-Swiss Programme for Development of Towns

**financed by the Second Swiss Contribution to selected Member States of the European
Union to reduce socio-economic disparities within the European Union**

The Minister for Development Funds and Regional Policy invites medium-sized towns at risk of losing socio-economic functions¹ to participate in a call for proposals for funding under the Polish-Swiss Programme for Development of Towns.

The objective of the Programme is to reduce socio-economic disparities within and between medium-sized Polish municipalities. The objective will be realised by financing comprehensive projects² of towns aimed at economic, environmental and social development, taking into account the principles of sustainable development. Implementation of the Programme will contribute to the promotion of the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and political pluralism, and will be carried out with respect for human rights, human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

Applicants can apply for funding of comprehensive projects comprising activities aimed at improving the quality of life of residents from the following thematic areas :

- vocational and professional education and training,
- financing for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises,
- providing support to migration management and promoting integration measures,
- improving public safety and security,
- energy efficiency and renewable energy,
- public transport,
- water and waste-water management,
- waste management,
- nature conservation and biodiversity,

¹ 139 cities designated as an area of strategic intervention in the National Strategy for Regional Development, as listed in Annex 1 to this call for proposals announcement.

² The term Project, as used in the announcement and other documents relevant for the DoT implementation, means a Programme Component indicated in article 1.3 point o of 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.

- health and social protection,
- minorities and socially disadvantaged groups,
- civic engagement and transparency.

Social inclusion as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation are cross-cutting themes that shall be mainstreamed in the proposed activities.

An additional objective of the Programme is strengthening the cities' institutional capacity for strategic planning, urban planning and management. Cooperation with Swiss towns and/or other relevant Swiss partners is aimed at contributing to this objective.

The Programme Operator of the Polish-Swiss Programme for Development of Towns is the Minister of Development Funds and Regional Policy, who at the same time acts as the National Coordination Unit (hereinafter: NCU-PO).

Call for proposals

Applications for funding will be selected in a two-stage call for proposals. The 139 medium-sized towns at risk of losing socio-economic functions are invited to participate in the first stage. The towns whose applications (Programme Component Outlines) submitted in the first stage are the best evaluated (finalist towns) will be invited to participate in the second stage for preparing Complete Programme Component Proposals, the number of which depends on the use of the available allocation.

National partnerships

The Project may be implemented in national partnership between Beneficiary (the town) and other local government units namely: municipalities (gminas), county (powiat) or their unions (which are legal entities) forming with the town a functionally related area with common social, economic or environmental objectives. The town may have one or more national partners. The rights and obligations of the national partners are regulated in the Partnership Agreement.

Bilateral cooperation with Swiss towns

The NCU-PO encourages partnerships with Swiss towns for enhancing institutional capacities and strengthening bilateral relations between Poland and Switzerland. In the first stage of the call, Polish towns will reserve a budget for possible future cooperation with a Swiss town and provide information on expectations and proposed areas of cooperation. The second stage of the call will involve identifying and establishing cooperation with potential Swiss cities, as well as designing joint activities where appropriate.

Deadline for submission of first stage applications (Programme Component Outlines)

The deadline for applications in the first phase of the call is December 16, 2024.

Eligibility criteria for applicants

Eligible to apply for funding are local government units - 139 medium-sized towns losing social and economic functions, indicated in the National Strategy for Regional Development 2030 as an area of strategic intervention, listed in Annex 1 to the call announcement, which is available at www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl.

Each eligible entity may successfully submit only one application for funding on the form attached as Annex 2 to the Announcement. If an applicant has submitted more than one application, the last application submitted by the deadline will be considered valid. The remaining applications will not be considered. Also, submission of a proposal after the deadline and by an ineligible entity will result in a negative assessment of the application without any further formal evaluation.

Support in the preparation of the Programme Component Outline

Towns interested in participating in the call for proposals will receive informational, educational and advisory support from the Association of Polish Cities, acting as an Operator of the Predefined Programme Component. The scope of support available at the first stage and second stage of the call for proposals is described in the Rules of Procedure for the call for proposals available at www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl.

Project Selection process and decision-making bodies in the first stage of the call for proposals

In the first stage of the call, applications for funding will be assessed in terms of formal and substantive criteria.

Formal evaluation of the Programme Component Outline

The formal assessment is carried out by the NCU-PO on a fulfil/not fulfil basis for each criterion. It is divided into a formal assessment of the project (Part A of the application form) and a formal assessment of each particular activity (Part B of the application form).

The list of elements subject to formal assessment is contained in the formal assessment chart, annex no. 3 to the announcement, available at www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl.

The NCU-PO informs the applicant about the results of the formal evaluation in writing. The applicant may request the NCU-PO to reassess formally the application, indicating the contested scope and justifying its position.

The NCU-PO shall reassess formally the application and take a final decision on the outcome of the assessment. It shall inform the applicant in writing of the results of the re-evaluation and, announce the results of the formal evaluation on the www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl website.

Substantive evaluation of the Programme Component Outline

Applications that have passed the formal assessment are subjected to a substantive assessment. The substantive assessment is carried out by at least two external experts selected by the NCU-PO. The experts shall sign a declaration of impartiality and confidentiality. The substantive assessment is a scoring appraisal in which at least 60% of the maximum number of points is required to obtain a positive assessment. The maximum number of points possible to be scored in the substantive assessment of a submitted application is 100 points.

The list of elements subject to substantive evaluation is provided in the substantive evaluation chart annex no. 4 to the announcement, available at www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl.

Applicants are not entitled to appeal against the results of the substantive assessment.

The results of the substantive assessment are presented to the Steering Committee of the Polish-Swiss Programme for Development of Towns through the establishment of a proposed ranking list by the NCU-PO.

Ranking list

It is prepared by the NCU-PO on the basis of the results of the substantive appraisal of all the Programme Component Outlines that were submitted to it. The ranking list provides the basis for the selection the finalist towns, which received the highest number of points in the substantive appraisal, fulfil the principles of geographical concentration resulting from the Regulation and exhaust the total value of co-financing available under the call. In addition to the finalist towns, reserve towns will be identified on the ranking list.

The Steering Committee shall review the ranking list provided by the NCU-PO and may amend it as justified. The Steering Committee decides on the selection of the finalist and reserve towns. The Steering Committee may make recommendations for implementation during the work on the Complete Programme Component Proposal.

The NCU-PO publishes the ranking list approved by the Steering Committee on www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl website and informs applicants in writing of the results of the first stage of the call.

The Steering Committee's decision on the ranking list is final. Applicants are not entitled to appeal against the Steering Committee's decision.

Reserve towns

The Steering Committee may indicate reserve towns from among cities that received a positive evaluation (score ≥ 60 points) but were not selected by the Steering Committee as finalists. Reserve towns may participate in the preparation of the Complete Programme Component Proposal. The Steering Committee may decide to implement the project of a reserve town/towns in whole or in part if it turns out that savings have been made in the projects of the finalist towns.

Call for the preparation of Complete Programme Component Proposals

The towns indicated in the list approved by the Steering Committee will be invited to submit a Complete Programme Component Proposal. The deadline for submission will be indicated in the invitation. The time for preparation of the proposal will be at least 5 months from the date of announcement of the ranking list.

During the preparation of the Complete Programme Component Proposal, the towns to which the invitation was addressed will participate in educational and advisory activities conducted by the Association of Polish Cities.

List of projects recommended for funding

After the formal and substantive verification of the Complete Programme Component Proposals, the NCU-PO will elaborate a list of projects recommended for signing the co-financing agreement.

The Steering Committee shall review the list provided by the NCU-PO and may amend it where justified.

The NCU-PO announces the list of projects approved by the Steering Committee at www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl and informs the applicants in writing.

The Steering Committee's decision on the list of projects recommended for co-funding is final and cannot be appealed by applicants.

Co-financing agreement

The NCU-PO signs co-financing agreements with the towns indicated by the Steering Committee on the approved list of projects recommended for co-funding. The template of the agreement is attached as Annex 6 to the announcement and available at the www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl website.

Eligibility of expenditures

The eligibility period for expenditure starts on the day of the call for proposals announcement, subject to the state aid and de minimis aid regulations, and ends in accordance with the provisions of the co-financing agreement, but not later than 31 March 2029. Eligibility of expenditures shall apply only to those projects which will be the subject of a co-financing agreement signed between the NCU-PO and the Beneficiary.

Eligible expenditures are defined in detail in the Rules of Procedure for the call for proposals. At the same time, it should be stipulated that in the case of projects covered by state aid, the scope and amount of eligible expenditure may be limited only to expenditure eligible for support under the relevant type of state aid³.

³ Types of state aid possible to be granted under the Programme will be defined in the Ordinance of the Minister competent for regional development, issued on the basis of Article 3ab (2) of the Act of 6 December 2006 on the principles of development policy.

Total amount of co-funding available under the call

The total amount of funding available in the call under the Programme for Development of Towns is 1 423 976 095 PLN, of which 85% is the Swiss financial contribution and 15% is the national financial contribution.

Minimum amount of project co-funding requested in the first stage of the call for proposals

The minimum amount of co-funding requested at the stage of the Programme Component Outline is 44 848 000 PLN.

The minimum amount of project co-financing may be reduced at the Programme Component Outline assessment stage as a result of verification of the feasibility, readiness of the activities to be undertaken, eligibility of expenditures or the permissible level of co-financing of the activities in relation to the provisions on state aid or de minimis aid.

Maximum amount of project co-funding

The maximum amount of co-funding for the project is 80 726 400 PLN.

Co-financing requirements – the maximum level of project co-financing

The town may apply for funding of up to 100% of the planned eligible expenditures of a project if there is no state aid or de minimis aid in any of the activities included in the project.

For activities in which the town anticipates the occurrence of state aid, the permissible intensity or amount of aid must be determined individually for that activity, based on the applicable legislation. The town is then obliged to finance from its own funds eligible expenditures that cannot be subsidised due to the restrictions resulting from these regulations. It also covers non-eligible expenditures necessary to be incurred in connection with the implementation of the project. The own contribution in projects with state aid must not lead to an excess of the permissible value and intensity of state aid.

In the national partnership and in grant activities, the own contribution and ineligible expenditures shall be covered by the national partner and the applicant respectively in the call for proposals for the grant action.

Website of the Programme for Development of Towns:

www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl

Legal framework of the Polish-Swiss Programme for Development of Towns and call for proposals documents (documents available at the www.programszwajcarski.gov.pl website)

- Framework Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Swiss Confederation 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, signed in Warsaw on 5 December 2022 (MP of 2023, item 255);

- 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;
- Support Measure Agreement - main text and Annex No. A "Support Measure Proposal";
- Rules of Procedures for the call for proposals.

Means of providing information on matters relating to the call for proposals

Information will be provided exclusively through the Consultation Centre of the Programme for Development of Towns, via website www.wsparciemiast.pl

Annexes

1. Alphabetical list of 139 medium-sized towns losing socio-economic functions;
2. Funding application form;
3. Formal evaluation chart for the Programme Component Outline;
4. Substantive evaluation chart for the Programme Component Outline;
5. Preliminary assessment chart for the occurrence of state or de minimis aid at the Programme Component Outline stage;
6. Template of the co-financing agreement.