

Chania 29/11/2024

Protocol No. 202400348

INVITATION TO TENDER AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (MAICh) constituent institute the **International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies**, invites tenders for the following service in market assessment and technical support, to be outsourced to an external provider for the project **INTERREG EUROPE “Improving policies for the promotion of Smart Villages and rural digital transformation - Digital Rural”**, co-funded by the European Union (EU) and Greek National Funds, of duration 4 years (01/04/2024 - 31/03/2028), which the institute coordinates. The total budget available for the subcontracted service is **35,000 Euro**, inclusive of all taxes, duties and legal fees.

BACKGROUND

The Interreg Europe Cooperation Programme has as objective the use of policy implementation to reduce disparities in the levels of development, growth and the quality of life in and across European regions, by facilitating local, regional and national governments to develop and deliver more effective policies by sharing solutions to common problems.

Interreg Europe enables public authorities and other relevant organisations to actively learn from the experience of their peers in other EU regions, in a process requiring the identification, analysis, adaptation and transfer of good practices of proven effectiveness to address pressing needs in the target area. In the case of Digital Rural, the policies concern the digitalization of rural areas to support rural residents and sustainable economic and social development of non-urban regions. The area of interest for the project is the Region of Crete, with the Cretan Regional Government serving as a partner in Digital Rural and as local policy authority.

For the period 2021-2027, Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) administrations have access to a wide range of funds to improve digital infrastructure, increase digital usage, enhance digital skills and inclusion, and to promote digital innovation in rural areas at all levels. However, to optimise the benefits, and to overcome digital gaps, the initiatives must prioritise the needs of the rural communities and stakeholders, as without targeted intervention, digital transformation proceed unequally and the urban-rural digital divide will progressively widen.



As public financing and support is limited, local Managing Authorities are participating in Digital Rural with the objective of creating the most cost-effective tools, with the greatest impact in the sector from the smallest public resource investment, thus providing the greatest socio-economic benefit.

Digital Rural was designed by policy-makers from local administration in regions with rural demographics, to allow the improvement of local policy instruments through two parallel learning processes that acknowledge the different starting points for digitalization in rural areas: a bottom-up initiative to define Digital Policy requirements that enlists the cooperation of local inhabitants to co-design digital pathways; and a top-down process to transfer and adapt effective innovative policies identified through interregional exchange.

The Digital Rural project focuses on networking, exchanging experience and the transfer of good practices, with the aim of finding solutions to shared challenges, with final objective the coordinated use of incoming funds from various EU, national and local policies funding sources, in order to make investments more efficient, to accelerate the implementation of the Smart Village concept, and to decrease the digital gaps between rural and urban areas.

The Digital rural consortium includes, in addition to the MAICh and the Region of Crete, Rural Local authorities and policy experts from Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands and Poland, and an advisory partner from Slovenia.

The TASKS that constitute the SERVICE UNDER TENDER are designed to support the identification and implementation of specific policy improvements that will result in more effective use of public funds for rural digitalization by the Region of Crete, and foster the optimal use of available funds by the project partner regions.

THE SERVICE UNDER TENDER is comprised of the following tasks:

TASK 1. Digital Policies Assessment (DPA)

The Digital Policies Assessment will be wide-ranging analysis of the state-of-the-art of rural digitalization policy at an EU, Greek national, and Cretan Regional level. The report will also examine the particular needs of the rural areas within the Region of Crete with regard to digitization, both in terms of infrastructure, services, and technical and other support, and an in-depth analysis of the most important digitalization gaps and other factors hindering digital-based development in the Region. Together this information will provide a policy road-map for the full digitalization of the Region. The data used for the analysis will be that available from official national sources, but also other local or regional data pertinent to the Region of Crete, provided by MAICh as contractor. The first draft of the DPA is to be submitted for approval by 28/12/2024.

The approved draft will serve as the basis for the further development of the final Digital Policies Assessment document, to be produced by the service provider incorporating all requested modifications with final conclusions, for delivery by 15/03/2025.



TASK 2. Coordination and management of workshops

Organization and execution of a series of seven workshops, one per international partners' meeting (in Estonia, Ireland and Latvia), plus four online (during the period December 2024 - March 2027) that will guide partners into preparing bottom-up stakeholder consultation exercises, extraction of key information from the DPA and analysing existing rural digitalization Good Practices in their regions.

In all cases the service provider (SP) will lead the workshops, following the Application Form by guiding discussion and coordinating critical peer-review of the locally-nominated Good Practices, and local stakeholder consultation exercises.

Each workshop will focus on the peer-review of the stakeholder consultation exercises and the development of strategies to maximise stakeholder engagement and extract relevant data. All workshops will follow the description outlined in the Application Form of the project (attached as a PDF).

Following each event, the SP will deliver a meeting report in a template provided within 2 months of the workshop close.

It is estimated that each workshop will require the presence of 2- 3 dedicated staff members from the SP.

TASK 3. Definition, documentation and follow-up of the TOP-DOWN and BOTTOM-UP learning approaches

The aim of this task is to make an evaluative comparison of existing methodologies for top-down and bottom-up approaches, described in the Application Form of this project. This document will include an analysis of top-down approaches in interregional exchanges that will provide a source of innovative actions to be included in the DPA in a top-down mode. Additionally, the document will define the bottom-up approaches that comprise participative actions, used to define the main policy to be included in the DPA. The document is to be submitted for approval by 28/08/2025.

TASK 4. Identification of Good Practices

The fourth part of the service involves a comparative analysis of Good Practices, benchmarking of the Region of Crete's Good Practices against those from other Digital Rural partners. The aim is to gather, analyse, and document successful methodologies and strategies used in related Interreg Europe or other Initiatives, or successfully applied in other regions, that can be replicated or adapted to improve future projects in the Region of Crete.

The document is to be submitted for approval by 30/11/2025.

TASK 5. Design and implementation of quality monitoring tools

The fifth part of the service is the creation of tools to monitor and assess the quality of all aspects of the project's activities, such as the creation of a network of experts, a Quality Monitoring Plan, quality evaluation questionnaires and the creation of a quality report per semester.



The Quality Monitoring Plan and the evaluation questionnaires are to be submitted for approval by 28/02/2026. Quality reports will be delivered within 1 month after the end of each semester, until the end of Semester 5.

SERVICE DELIVERABLES:

1. Digital Policies Assessment
2. Workshops: For each of the 7 workshops described -preparation of documents and materials, guidance through the planned activities and evaluation of newly generated information. Coordination of in-person with 1 to 3 staff attending each workshop, with expected 18 staff attendances. Workshop Reports.
3. Top-down and bottom-up methodology reports.
4. Identification of Good Practices in Rural Digitalization (report).
5. Quality Monitoring Plan, quality evaluation questionnaires and quality reports.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE:

Payment will be made periodically at the end of each semester, from Semester 2 (ending 31st March 2025) to Semester 5 (ending 30th September, 2026), on satisfactory delivery of the works programmed for that semester, according to the schedule outlined in the approved Digital Rural Project Application Form.

Semester 2 (ending 31 st March, 2025)	25% of total value of contract
Semester 3 (ending 30 th September, 2025)	25% of total value of contract
Semester 4 (ending 31 st March, 2026)	25% of total value of contract
Semester 5 (ending 30 th September, 2026)	25% of total value of contract

CONDITIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDER:

Project language for service delivery is English.

Tenderers must demonstrate that they have the technical experience to complete the tendered service, and a suitably qualified and skilled work team. In particular they should have a demonstrable expertise in policy implementation, local and regional government funding, and extensive experience in the coordination of projects co-funded by EU Territorial Cooperation Programmes, as evidenced by at least 10 years' experience, with at least 3 projects having been completed in the last 3 years.

Experience is to be demonstrated in terms of total man-months at a particular qualification level (manager, team members) per project type. Biographies of all team members should be included, and the following table must be completed for each member and each project:

Cooperation program	Title of the project	Name of team member	Qualification level and Position held	Duration of work (months)	Description of tasks



In the event of similar offers, the tenderer with the greatest relevant experience will be selected. Participation in Interreg Europe Projects will be particularly valued, and to distinguish between similarly-ranked tenderers, experience in Interreg Europe will count double (each man month in IE will count as 2 months). The cost of the tender will be considered only in the case that all quality criteria are met, in which case the lowest cost tender meeting the criteria will be selected.

Tenderers will submit a sealed tender in English, to include:

- I. Technical offer indicating the members of the team who will implement the service, detailing their qualifications and prior experience in related European projects (with a separate indication for Interreg Europe projects), and a description of their projected role in the service provision.
- II. Financial offer

Interested parties are invited to submit their tenders to:

Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania
Alsyllion Agropyio, P.O. Box 85, P.O. Box 73100 Chania
Subject: Call for tender – Interreg Europe Digital Rural Project
Attention: Ms. A. Lioni, Head of Accounting

CAUTION: In the case of postal delivery, the sender must ensure that the tender is received by the institute by the date and time indicated.

Further Information may be obtained from Ms Lioni at artemis@maich.gr or tel: (0030) 28210 35000

CONDITIONS

- 1. BUDGET:** 35,000 € including all taxes, duties and legal fees. Tenders that exceed the available budget will not be considered.
- 2. AWARD CRITERION:** 50% of the evaluation will be based on the most economically advantageous offer (with lowest price), and the remaining 50% will be based on the experience demonstrated in the “Conditions for service provider” section.
- 3. ELIGIBILITY:** Applicants must have a proven track record of professional activity relevant to the scope of the project.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Interested parties are invited to submit their tenders within **fifteen (15) calendar days** of the date of publication of this invitation to tender, i.e. no later than **Friday 13th December, 2024, at 14:00**

EVALUATION PROCEDURE

Applications will be evaluated by a three-member Evaluation Committee, appointed by decision of the Director of the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania, and in turn will provide its recommendation to the Director.

OTHER CONDITIONS - OBJECTIONS

1. Tenders not received by the date and time specified above will not be considered. In the case of postal delivery, the MAICH is not responsible for late delivery/receipt.
2. All participants will be informed of the results of the call and will have the right to appeal against the decision within five calendar days of the date of the announcement of the results. They will also have the right of access to the evaluation/scoring sheets of the tenders, subject to compliance with the Data Protection Act.
3. MAICH reserves the right to cancel this invitation for tenders at any stage, without the possibility for any claim by any applicant against MAICH.

The Director of MAICH



Dr George Baourakis

Processing of personal data

The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute will process, contractor, the personal data contained in the application forms of the interested parties to this call for applications.

The personal data will be transmitted to the funding body, where applicable, to the authorities or services responsible for the management and control of the procedure and may be transmitted to co-applicants with a legitimate interest in doing so, at their written request. Without prejudice to any special provisions or legal claims, the data of unsuccessful candidates will be stored for a maximum period of twelve months after the end of the project. Interested parties shall have the right to access their data, to have inaccurate data corrected or incomplete data completed, to have data deleted if they are no longer necessary for the purposes for which they were collected or otherwise processed or if they object to the processing in the absence of compelling legitimate grounds for the processing, and to restrict the processing. For any matter relating to the processing of personal data, any interested party may contact the Data Protection Officer by contacting dpo@maich.gr. If the person concerned considers that the protection of his/her personal data is in any way affected, he/she may appeal to the Data Protection Authority (www.dpa.gr).