



Project Support Facility Manual

Contents

Objective	4
1. Publication of calls	5
2. Eligible projects	5
3. Who can apply	5
4. Funding terms and conditions	6
5. Application process	6
6. Budget structure and eligibility rules	7
7. Assessment of applications and selection of projects	8
8. PSF Grant	9
9. Communication and visibility	9
10. Reporting, monitoring, control and audit	9
11. Anti-corruption	11
12. Repayment of funds	11
13. Protection of personal data	11
14. Child Safeguarding	12

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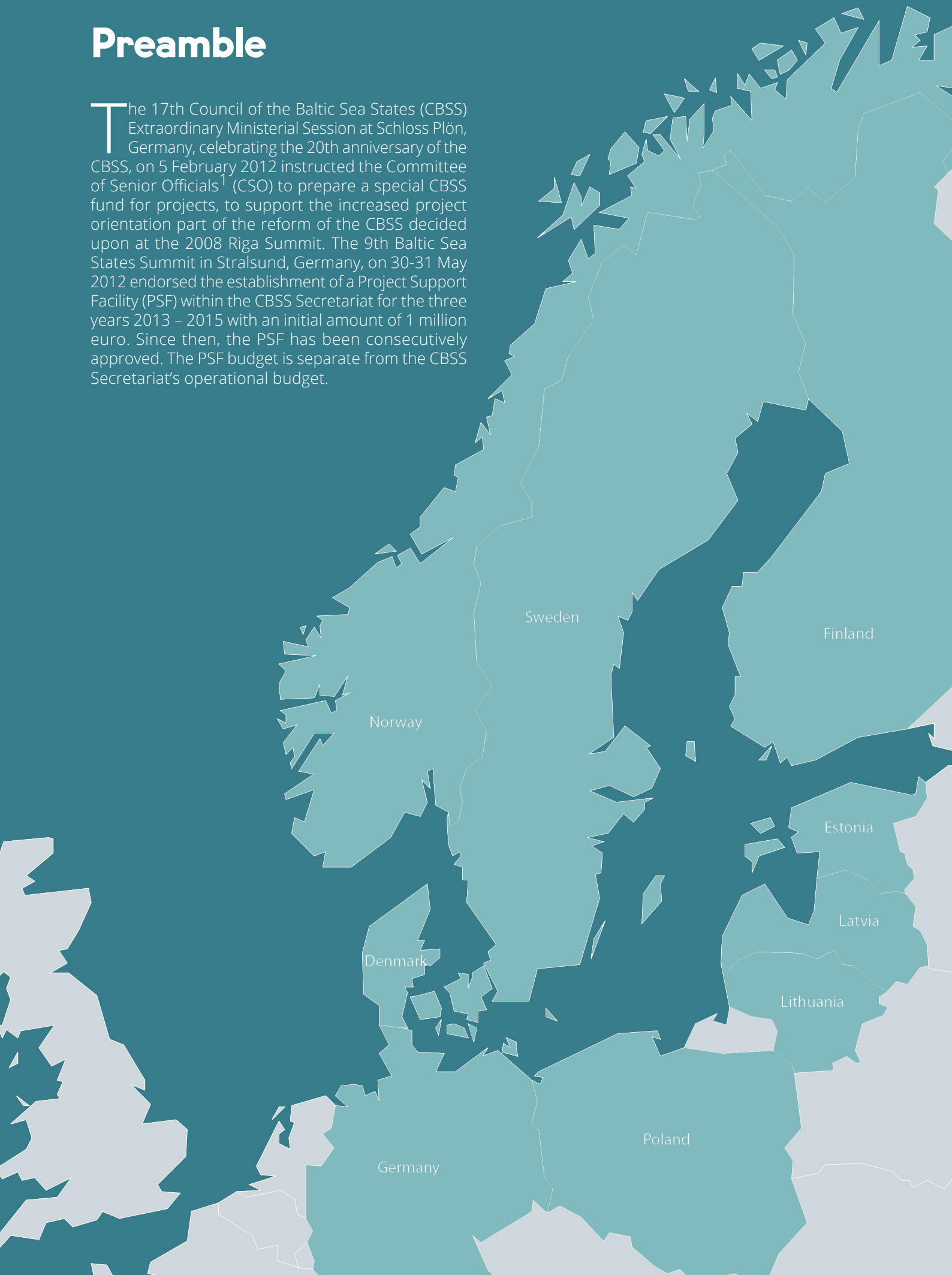
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Preamble

The 17th Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Extraordinary Ministerial Session at Schloss Plön, Germany, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the CBSS, on 5 February 2012 instructed the Committee of Senior Officials¹ (CSO) to prepare a special CBSS fund for projects, to support the increased project orientation part of the reform of the CBSS decided upon at the 2008 Riga Summit. The 9th Baltic Sea States Summit in Stralsund, Germany, on 30-31 May 2012 endorsed the establishment of a Project Support Facility (PSF) within the CBSS Secretariat for the three years 2013 – 2015 with an initial amount of 1 million euro. Since then, the PSF has been consecutively approved. The PSF budget is separate from the CBSS Secretariat's operational budget.





Objective

1. The purpose of the CBSS Project Support Facility (PSF) is to facilitate the preparation and implementation of regional cooperation projects by providing seed money and co-financing of external projects.
2. The PSF should be used to facilitate project preparation and implementation within the politically defined priority areas of the CBSS²:
 - **Regional Identity** long-term priority focuses on culture, higher education and youth. Through continued exploration of the Baltic Sea Region history, heritage, culture and identity we can build a deeper understanding for each other and a more resilient region.
 - The goal of **Safe & Secure Region** long-term priority is to make everyone feel safe and secure and at home in every corner of our region. We strive to improve the well-being of our communities, build networks and trust to jointly respond to unexpected hazards and emergencies.
 - The long-term priority **Sustainable & Prosperous Region** supports sustainable and resilient societies as well as economic and social development within the limits of healthy ecosystem to make the Baltic Sea Region a model that inspires other regions around the world.
3. The PSF should bring added value to the Baltic Sea Region, show impact on regional cooperation and foster sustainable partnerships.

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 1 The day-to-day decision-making of the CBSS is led by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO). The CSO consists of representatives from the Foreign Ministries of the CBSS Member States. For more information: <https://cbss.org/about-us/council/>.

2 For more information on our activities in each of the three priority areas, please visit the respective sections of our website at <https://cbss.org/priorities/>.



1. Publication of calls

The CSO decides on the financial period for the PSF with one call per year.

The CSO will select a focus area prior to the publication of a call based on the proposal provided by a Selection Committee (SC). The SC consists of CBSS experts in accordance with the focus of the PSF call and its long-term priority(-ies).

The focus area should be within one of the long-term priorities of the CBSS or target the **presidency priority**. In exceptional cases, the CSO may select a focus area that relates to more than one CBSS long-term priority.

Based on the CSO decision, the CBSS Secretariat formulates a call for proposals which is published after approval of the CSO. Applications will be assessed by a SC who recommends projects for selection to the CSO. The assessment and selection of projects will follow the procedure as described under point 7 of this Manual.



2. Eligible projects

Projects financed from the CBSS PSF shall fulfil the following criteria:

- a. Bring added value for the BSR and to at least one of the CBSS long-term priority areas.
- b. Bring added value to and visibility for macro-regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.
- c. Engage multiple actors and strive to increase coherence in cooperation among the CBSS Member States.
- d. Have outcomes of a sustainable character.
- e. Ensure that the results of the project are disseminated to relevant stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region.
- f. Where applicable, have the potential to become a basis for a network, partnership or cooperation model that would become viable beyond the duration of the project life itself.
- g. Projects must involve partners from at least three different CBSS Member States, including the lead partner (LP).
- h. In exceptional circumstances for projects below the funding amount of 25 000 Euro, which are considered good practice models, projects with only two participating CBSS Member States but with three partners might be eligible. In this case, the Director General must present the exceptional circumstances to the CSO for decision-making.



3. Who can apply

- a. National, regional and local public authorities.
- b. Non-profit and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- c. The Lead Partner must be registered in one of the CBSS Member States. The Lead Partner shall have the authority to contract external services as part of the proposed project.

- d. Partners may also include legal entities in any of the CBSS Observer States.
- e. Applying entities must demonstrate having the necessary financial and managerial capacities to carry out the project from initiation to the end. They will need to confirm that, if the project is selected, other sources of funds are secured in order to implement the project as described.
- f. Only legal entities are eligible for funding. The PSF does not provide grants to individuals and does not provide funding for scholarships or tuition assistance for undergraduate or postgraduate studies.
- g. Organisations with at least two years of activity.
- h. In exceptional cases public or private enterprises, especially in the social or environmental spheres, can be eligible for funding. In this case, the Director General must present the exceptional circumstances to the CSO for the decision.



4. Funding terms and conditions

- a. Project proposals must have secured a minimum of 10% co-funding.
- b. PSF funding will range between 10 000 and 65 000 Euro.
- c. The PSF does not provide grants to individuals and does not provide funding for scholarships or tuition assistance for undergraduate or postgraduate studies.
- d. Tax liabilities arising from the payment from the PSF are the responsibility of the recipients.
- e. A project that is already initiated or has been implemented when an application is submitted cannot be granted funds.



5. Application process

Funds are granted once a year. Call for applications is open from **15 February** to **31 March** of each year. The CBSS Secretariat recommends starting the project implementation no earlier than in September of the same year and for projects to last no longer than 24 months.

The official language of the PSF is English. Therefore, the application, the reports and all obligatory templates must be completed in English.

Submission of applications

The application must be submitted together with the following supporting documents:

- The Lead Partner's most recent Annual Report together with the accompanying Audit Report of the organisation;
- CV(s) of project coordinator(s).

Applications with all required documents shall be submitted through the PSF online portal.

If the submitted application is not complete with all

attachments when the final date for applications has passed, the application will be considered incomplete and will not be processed.

If the application is complete but clarifications have been requested by the CBSS Secretariat, the applicant shall submit these clarifications within the time frame given.



6. Budget structure and eligibility rules

Project applicants must include the estimated budget in the application form. The planned costs are divided into different budget lines. Projects must plan and report within the following budget lines:

ELIGIBLE COST CATEGORIES	€
Personnel costs	
Travel and accommodation, including subsistence costs	
External expertise & services	
Administration/overhead (max. 7% of the eligible costs)	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	

FINANCING PLAN	€	% OF ELIGIBLE COSTS
PSF funding		
Contribution of the partners		
Other sources of funding		
TOTAL FUNDING		

Expenditure eligibility

- All expenditures must comply with the principles of efficiency, sound financial management and cost-effectiveness;
- All expenditure is essential for the project's implementation and would not have been incurred if the project had not been carried out;
- All expenditure is generated during the lifetime of the project;
- Expenditure is compliant with applicable tax and social legislation;
- Project costs must be comparable and adequate as well as proportionate to the costs in the country/ countries involved.

Personnel costs shall be reported according to the actual time spent on the project. The costs shall be calculated based on actual gross salary plus obligatory social charges and any other statutory personnel costs. The time each employee spends working on the project shall be recorded using timesheets or an equivalent time registration system.

Travel and accommodation, including subsistence costs, shall be reported according to actual costs spent while subsistence costs are reported in accordance with the internal rules of the partner.

External expertise & services costs relate to work undertaken by external actors.

Administration/overhead may be charged at a flat rate of a maximum of 7% of the total amount of eligible costs actually incurred.

Expenditure ineligibility

Equipment, investments and other costs which are not included in any of the above budget lines are not eligible as costs. This includes financial charges such as charges for financial transactions and bank charges. This also applies to debit interests and exchange rate losses.

Exchange rate

Amounts indicated in the application form and expenditures reported in the financial report must be denominated in EUR. Project partners whose national currency is other than EUR must convert costs in their national currency into EUR, applying the monthly accounting exchange rate of the European Commission ([InforEuro](#)). The monthly exchange rate is the rate of the month the final report is submitted.

Value added tax

Value added tax (VAT), which is recoverable by whatever means, cannot be considered eligible, even if it is not actually recovered. Only non-recoverable VAT may be included in the final report.



7. Assessment of applications and selection of projects

Technical eligibility check of the application shall be carried out by the CBSS Secretariat. The PSF SC may consult the technically eligible applications with relevant CBSS Expert Groups or Networks for opinion when no relevant EG/Network exists.

CSO Members can request more information and can provide their written input to the SC.

The SC will, taking opinions received into account, make a quality assessment and as a result elaborate a list of recommended projects for financing. The main assessment criteria are the following:

- Direct relevance to the implementation of a CBSS long-term priority;
- Project must provide substantial added value for one of the areas of expertise within the long-term priorities;
- Coherence, durability, dissemination and sustainability of results;
- Quality of project partnership and of budget and project management capacity;

- Quality of the methodological approach including content and qualities of the project, where applicable;
- Risks of the project.

The SC will take into account the announced focus area for the current call. Projects of very good quality representing other areas of the CBSS long-term priorities may also be eligible for selection.

All applicants will receive a written notification of the outcome.

Applications that have been selected for financing will receive further instructions on requirements to complete the contractual procedures.

Project applications that receive financial commitments from third parties in the case of multiple applications to different funds and instruments must be withdrawn by the LP from the PSF application procedure.



8. PSF Grant

After the project has been approved, the LP is requested to fill in the grant documents that are provided by CBSS Secretariat.

When the grant contract is signed by LP and the CBSS Director General or CBSS official signatories a pre-financing of 80% of the requested amount from PSF shall be paid to the LP within 30 days following the date of entry into force of the grant contract.

The LP shall distribute the pre-financing only to the co-partners who have acceded to the grant contract.

The final payment of the balance of 20% of the requested amount from PSF shall be paid within 30 days by CBSS Secretariat after approving the final reports, certificate of fund use and payment request.



9. Communication and visibility

The LP shall use the logo of the CBSS, mention CBSS financial contribution in all public documents regarding the Project and in all public material produced during and at the end of the Project. PSF Project Communication Guidelines, including a set of project visibility tools, including relevant logos fulfilling basic requirements shall be requested from CBSS Secretariat via email to psf@cbss.org.



10. Reporting, monitoring, control and audit

Projects that are up to 12 months are requested to submit only one report after the implementation of the project is finalised. The projects have up to three months to fulfil this obligation.

For projects that are longer than 12 months, a progress report shall be submitted as agreed in the grant agreement.

Financial and technical reports will be sent to the CBSS Secretariat for approval.

CSO members can request to receive final reports from specific projects of their interest.

The CBSS Secretariat is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the projects. The CBSS Secretariat will request regularly an update of the granted project from LP and will report to the CSO.

The CBSS Secretariat should be contacted in case of:

- changes in contact details of the Lead Partner or any Co-partner;
- change of the Lead Partner's bank account;
- change of the VAT status;
- activity plan adjustments;
- changes in the partner constellation;
- reallocation between budget lines that are above the flexible level of 10 %;
- changes in the project duration;
- any other key project deviations.

In case of any changes listed above the LP shall submit the request to the CBSS Secretariat one month before the last day of the project duration.

Budget flexibility allows projects to exceed their planned total budget lines by 10% without contacting the CBSS Secretariat.

The project does not require a separate external audit, however, the project should be checked and/or audited according to the partner's internal rules. The certificate of fund use signed by an elected auditor or official signatories shall be submitted together with the project report. All project partners are obliged to keep all financial and accounting documents concerning the activities financed under the PSF until seven years after the project finalisation (date of the final payment). In particular, originals of invoices, tickets/boarding cards and other accounting documents must be kept available upon request.

Templates for the PSF Progress Report, PSF Financial Report and PSF Final Report are available on the CBSS PSF website www.cbss.org/psf.

The narrative and financial reports together with supporting documents such as certificate of fund use, relevant agreements, publications, etc. must be submitted within 3 months after the final date of the project duration.

Guidelines for reporting

- Templates for the PSF Progress Report, PSF Financial Report, PSF Final Report and Certificate of fund use are available on the CBSS PSF website www.cbss.org/psf.
- Documents shall be in English.
- Relevant supporting documentation, such as agreements and publications, should be enclosed together with the PSF Final Report. Other documents, such as receipts, verifications, and timesheets, should not be submitted but kept available by the LP upon request.
- The reports and supporting documents must be submitted by email, within 3 months of the end date of the Project, to psf@cbss.org.

PSF project final report (both narrative and financial parts with the supporting documents) shall be sent to CBSS electronically at psf@cbss.org.



11. Anti-corruption

The CBSS Secretariat is committed to transparency and takes appropriate measures to prevent irregularity, fraud or corruption relative to the use of resources and funds. Thus, the CBSS Secretariat reserves the right to suspend payments and/or claim repayment of the funds in full or in part, if the funds are found to be misused or not satisfactorily accounted for by the lead partner, any other partner or participant in a PSF project.



12. Repayment of funds

If the project report is not submitted in time without notifying the CBSS Secretariat or not submitted at all, the CBSS Secretariat reserves the right not to pay the remaining 20% of the grant and to decide that the granted funds shall be repaid, entirely or in part.

Funds that have not been used in accordance with the approval letter shall be reported and repaid to the CBSS Secretariat. The repayment shall be made no later than the date on which the final report shall be submitted. If funds are to be repaid, the interest accrued on the disbursed funds shall be included.



13. Protection of personal data

Data processing by the CBSS Secretariat

Any personal data under the application will be processed under the responsibility of the CBSS Secretariat in accordance with and for the purposes set out in the [CBSS General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) routines](#). For grants where the Grantor is the Council of the Baltic Sea States, an EU regulatory or executive agency, joint undertaking or other EU body, the processing will be subject to Regulation 2018/172510³.

Data processing by the Lead Partner

The Lead Partner must process personal data under the Application in compliance with the applicable EU, international and national law on data protection (in particular, Regulation 2016/67911⁴).

The LP must ensure that personal data is:

- processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subjects;
- collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes;

³ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 1.11.2018, p. 39)

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC ('GDPR') (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1).

- adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed;
- accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date;
- kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the data is processed and;
- processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the data.



14. Child Safeguarding

The CBSS Secretariat is fully committed to keeping children we come in contact with through our work protected and safeguarded from actions that place them at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, injury and any other harm.

The LP agrees to apply strict child safeguarding policies and procedures that cover the four key areas outlined in the [CBSS Child Safe Guarding Policy](#).

