



## **Protect Defenders EU: Appointment of the Director / Head of Secretariat**

**Job Title:** Director / Head of Secretariat (Permanent, Full-Time)

**Department:** Executive Management

**Reports To:** Board of Directors

**Location:** Brussels, Belgium

**For information about Protect Defenders please visit:**

<https://protectdefenders.eu/>

<https://protectdefenders.eu/about-us/#who>

### **Role Summary:**

The Secretariat of ProtectDefenders.eu is a coordination entity based in Brussels acting under the supervision of a Board of Directors composed of four leading international NGO's responsible for the accountability of the EU Mechanism to support human rights defenders globally. The Director of the Secretariat is responsible for the coordination of the Consortium in order to provide strategic leadership to Protectdefenders.eu, as well as for the overall management of the Secretariat team and programmes. This role encompasses oversight of all operational, financial, and administrative functions, including direct supervision of the Heads of Programs & Partnerships and the Head of Finance & Operations. The Director will represent ProtectDefenders.eu at the highest levels, including with donors, the Board, and the Consortium of ProtectDefenders which is composed of 12 international and regional civil society organisations for the protection of human rights defenders. This role also involves strategic guidance to departments, ensuring alignment with the mechanism's mission and goals, as well as fundraising.

### **Key Responsibilities:**

#### **1. Coordination and accountability (approximately 30%)**

##### A. Coordination of Consortium

- In close coordination with the Consortium, provide leadership and strategic direction for ProtectDefenders.eu, ensuring alignment with the mission and objectives of the Mechanism.

- Facilitate the development and implementation of a strategic plan, including setting long-term goals and priorities.
- Engage with the Consortium of ProtectDefenders at the highest level, ensuring effective collaboration and communication among members.
- Responsible for fundraising and organisational growth in line with the Board and Consortium agreements.
- Lead and coordinate Consortium meetings, ensuring that agenda aligns with the strategic goals and priorities of ProtectDefenders.eu.

#### B. Coordination of Secretariat

- Oversee the implementation and effectiveness of all programs and partnerships.
- Lead strategically with the input and support of the senior leadership team.
- Provide support and oversight for the development and execution of program strategies and annual work plans.

#### C. Board Relations & Accountability

- Serve as the primary liaison with the Board, providing regular updates on program performance, strategic initiatives, overall financial overview and key issues.
- Lead and coordinate Board meetings (agenda, reporting).
- Validate consolidated narrative and financial reporting to the EU.

#### D. Operational Oversight

- Implement and monitor policies and procedures to ensure compliance with legal, ethical, and organisational standards.
- Manage organisational risks and ensure that appropriate risk mitigation strategies are in place.

### **2. Leadership and management (approximately 50%)**

- Coordinate and provide strategic guidance to all departments, including Programs & Partnerships, Finance & Operations, and others as needed.
- Directly supervise the Head of Programs & Partnerships and Head of Finance & Operations, providing leadership, support, and performance management.
- Foster a positive and productive work environment, encouraging professional development and team collaboration, learning and excellence.
- Ensure that staff are aligned with the Secretariat goals and have the resources needed to succeed.
- Financial Oversight and Administration:
  - Collaborate with the Head of Finance & Operations (HoFO), ensuring robust financial management, budgeting, and compliance with financial regulations.
  - With the HoFO, ensure that administrative operations support the efficient functioning of the Secretariat, including human resources, IT, and office management.

### **3. External representation (approximately 20%)**

#### A. Donor relations, Advocacy and Representation:

- Build and maintain strong relationships with EU donors, providing regular updates on progress and financial status and cultivating strategic alliances.
- Represent ProtectDefenders.eu in high-level external meetings, including negotiating funding agreements and ensuring donor requirements are met.
- Provide high-level advocacy, where directed by the Board, and representation for ProtectDefenders.eu, including engaging with EU institutions and other key stakeholders.
- Represent ProtectDefenders.eu at conferences, public forums, and strategic meetings as needed.

#### **Qualifications and Experience:**

- Master's degree in Human Rights, International Relations, Business Administration, Finance, or a related field. A relevant professional qualification is also acceptable.
- At least 5 years of senior management experience in a similar role, preferably within the non-profit sector with a focus on human rights or international development and preferably with Consortium coordination experience.
- Experience in successful management, leadership, risk management, and development in a complex international network.
- Strong understanding and experience of the needs of human rights defenders at risk and holistic protection responses.
- Decisive, result and solution-focused with demonstrable experience in building and maintaining effective working relationships, both internally and externally.
- Strategic ability to operate in a complex structure and understanding of good governance and appropriate risk management.
- Fluent in English; French desirable and additional languages are an asset.

#### **Skills and Competencies:**

- **Leadership:** Proven leadership skills with the ability to manage and motivate staff, foster team collaboration, and drive organizational success.
- **Financial Acumen:** Strong financial management skills, including budgeting, financial reporting, and compliance.
- **Communication:** Excellent communication skills, with the ability to effectively represent ProtectDefenders.eu to a wide range of stakeholders.
- **Relationship Management:** Proven ability to build and maintain relationships with donors, board members, Consortium members, and other key stakeholders.
- **Problem-Solving:** Strong problem-solving skills, with the ability to address complex issues and make data-driven decisions.
- **Operational Management:** Ability to oversee and improve operational processes, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in organizational activities.
- Strong interpersonal skills and a managerial style that fosters inclusivity, mutual respect, and collaboration.
- Politically astute, with demonstrable experience in contributing to a conducive policy environment, influencing policy processes at the global, regional, and national levels and a clear understanding of the context for human rights defenders.
- Sensitivity towards gender, ethnic and cultural identities and related dynamics, and an understanding of equitable employment strategies.

- Integrity, sound judgment, cultural intelligence, and passion for Equality Diversity and Inclusion in an international context, with an ability to foster respect internally and externally and commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

### **Selection and Appointment:**

- This is a permanent position based in Brussels with occasional travel required to meet with stakeholders, partners, human rights defenders and attend conferences and other events.
- The Director may be required to work outside regular office hours to meet project deadlines or attend meetings and events.
- Gross monthly salary range: €7,000 – €8,000 depending on experience and seniority
- 13<sup>th</sup> month salary and holiday pay according to Belgian law
- Pension scheme contribution and medical insurance
- Transportation and home-working allowances
- Meal vouchers and Eco-vouchers
- Pro-rata 20 legal days holidays + 6 extra legal days

### **Application Process:**

This recruitment process is being managed by Hanson Search on behalf of ProtectDefenders.eu. To apply, please send your CV and cover letter to [brussels@hansonsearch.com](mailto:brussels@hansonsearch.com)

*Use of AI for letter writing is not accepted*

### **Closing Date for Applications:**

Vacancy open until midnight **Sunday, 18 January 2026**. Please note that early applications are encouraged and that selection and interviews will be done on a rolling basis. The deadline may as such close early.

By joining ProtectDefenders.eu, you will contribute to a meaningful mission dedicated to protecting human rights defenders worldwide. We look forward to receiving your application.

***ProtectDefenders.eu is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from individuals of all backgrounds and experiences. We are committed to creating an inclusive and diverse work environment.***