



TERMS OF REFERENCE

for experts ("assessors") to assist in the evaluation of grant applications received in the framework of the call for proposals

Reference: EuropeAid/136873/IH/ACT/RS

European Partnership with Municipalities

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Table of contents

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION	3
2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS	6
2.1. Overall objective	6
2.2. Results to be achieved by the Contractor	6
3. SCOPE OF THE WORK	6
3.1. General	6
3.2. Specific Activities	7
4. LOGISTICS AND TIMING	10
4.1. Location	10
4.2. Location of the assignment will be in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia	10
5. REQUIREMENTS	11
5.1. Staff	11
5.2. Facilities	12
6. REPORTS	12
6.1. Reporting requirements	12
6.2. Submission & approval of reports	12

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

European PROGRES background

European PROGRES is a multi-donor Programme, financed by the European Union (EU), the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Serbia, designed to support sustainable development in the South East and South West Serbia. The Programme has been conceptualised jointly with the European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (SEIO), which has responsibility for monitoring implementation and providing assistance and facilitation. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has been granted with an initial budget of 17.46 million Euros and has the overall responsibility for the Programme implementation.

Through a multi-sector approach this Programme will contribute to sustainable development of underdeveloped areas and creation of more favourable environment for infrastructure and business growth by strengthening local governance, improving vertical coordination, planning and management capacities, improving business environment and development, as well as enhancing implementation of social inclusion and employment policies.

The Programme works towards achieving four main results, while good governance principles are interwoven as a cross cutting aspect of the entire intervention:

1. Strengthened local governance, planning and management capacities through introduction of new, or improvement/elimination of existing procedures and processes in line with the principles of good governance
2. Increased competitiveness of local economy through improved business environment and management/organizational capacities of small and medium enterprises/agricultural cooperatives
3. Improved access to employment, offering equal opportunities to both men and women, and social inclusion of most vulnerable and marginalised groups through development and implementation of local policies resulting in reduced migration from South East and South West Serbia
4. Effects of Serbia's European accession communicated to general public.

Final beneficiaries, but also the key stakeholders and financial contributors of this Programme are 34 municipalities from the third and fourth group of development level, which have responsibility of taking ownership of activities implemented in their territory:

- Novi Pazar, Ivanjica, Nova Varoš, Priboj, Prijepolje, Raška, Sjenica and Tutin, in the South West Serbia
- Prokuplje, Blace, Žitorađa, Kuršumlija in the Toplica District
- Leskovac, Bojnik, Vlasotince, Lebane, Medveđa and Crna Trava in the Jablanica District
- Vranje, Bosilegrad, Bujanovac, Vladičin Han, Preševo, Surdulica and Trgovište in the Pčinja District
- Brus in Rasinska District
- Aleksinac, Gadžin Han, Doljevac, Merošina and Svrlijig in Niški District
- Babušnica, Bela Palanka in Pirotski District
- Knjaževac in Zaječarski District.

Other beneficiaries include municipality-founded institutions and public utility companies, civil society organisations (CSO) and media in the participating municipalities. It is the inhabitants of the South East and South West Serbia who will feel the biggest benefits of the Programme.

Specific background

The programme will intensively work on strengthening local administration capacities and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in service providing and implementation of existing legal framework, especially regarding public procurement. This is in line with the findings of the Serbia 2014 Progress Report (pages 10 and 25). In order to increase potentials of municipalities in strengthening industrial activities this programme will support development of infrastructure preconditions for economic development, as well as satisfy basic infrastructure needs of benefiting municipalities, which is fully in line with the Serbia 2014 Progress Report (pages 20 and 22). Furthermore, the programme will provide support to SMEs and agricultural producers in increasing their competitiveness through introduction of cooperation, new technologies and standardisation, which is underlined in the Serbia 2014 Progress Report as one of main issues concerning economic criteria (pages 29, 30, 31, 37 and 38).

The European Union has earmarked 19.6 million Euros and the Swiss Government 4.86 million Euros for the implementation of European PROGRES. The Government of Serbia will provide co-funding of individual projects through the line ministries and local self-governments. From the total budget, eight million Euros have been set aside for priority infrastructure projects, which will be implemented directly through the Ministry of Finance's Central Financing and Contracting Unit (CFCU). The European Integrations Office of the Government of Serbia provides strategic guidance and the Programme is implemented by UNOPS and the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has been granted with an initial budget of 17.46 million Euros and has the overall responsibility for the Programme implementation.

This Programme will have direct effect on beneficiary municipalities in a variety of sectors: good governance as cross-cutting and with specific result activities, education, employment, infrastructure and economic development. New and improved economic infrastructure will enable creation of jobs and promote sustainable economic development. An emphasis on inter-municipal projects, in particular the common economic development exercises, will enhance mutual cooperation and trust between ethnic groups and factions.

The Programme will contribute to strengthened competitiveness of participating areas, making them more attractive to foreign and domestic investment and less prone to deterring factors. It should thereby serve to help reduce the widening disparities between regions in the country, improving cohesion and stability on the national level. The reduction of unemployment will also help enhance intra-regional social cohesion and promote stability locally.

Attention to employment that takes into account equal opportunities for men and women, and keeps environmental concerns in mind can help build awareness of the regions' unique characteristics and potential for tourism. This is not only a prospective growth industry, but can assist in forming a more positive regional identity that can inspire youths to remain and develop their regions rather than seek their careers in other regions or countries.

The Programme will work **Horizontal dimension of good governance** by providing specific support to the local self-governments endeavouring to improve their organisational structures which would internally enhance concrete application of the five good governance principles, thus making the public sector in a municipality, including local administration, more accountable, transparent and efficient in providing services to the citizens. This will start with the Programme providing support to municipalities in assessing and identifying governance issues that need to be

addressed at the local level, and subsequently in development and/or improvement of new/existing local policies or regulations that will be in the line with the overall objective.

Features of the Sector

Regional disparities in the Republic of Serbia are among the highest in Europe.

The largest concentration of the extremely underdeveloped municipalities is in the South East and South West Serbia¹, where 29 municipalities belong to the group of 46 extremely underdeveloped. Other five municipalities participating in the Programme are closely connected geographically and are from the third group development level (less than 80% of the national average), sharing similar economic and social problems as well as communication and utility infrastructure needs.²

Opportunities for any wide and sustainable economic growth in these underdeveloped municipalities are severely hampered by **stagnant and opaque local regulations, depleted and inadequate capacities of local administrations and their officials, obsolete and/or run-down infrastructure, lowered levels of education and other investments in human capital, which all result in unfavourable business environment**. In turn this influences the ability to attract new direct foreign and domestic investments. These obstacles are underpinned by other elements of poor governance practices resulting in general inability to implement national reforms at the local level.

A common feature of all local self governments (LSGs) is that they are not well prepared to implement complex activities related to **municipal planning** and economic development. The infrastructure projects are chosen on ad hoc basis, without proper planning or impact assessment. The key preconditions for strategic planning: planning documentation, planning of investments, and resolved land ownership - are missing. The budgets are still prepared annually despite the fact that the legislation envisages process that takes into account three-year investment needs. The failure to update the land registers over decades led to huge discrepancies between the land registers and the land cadastre, resulting in additional obstacles in infrastructure development.

The speed of **economic development** is closely connected with the amount of direct domestic and foreign investments. The investment decisions of companies/investors are mainly influenced by the existing business opportunities and ease of doing business. The obsolete and inadequate infrastructure, lack of project documentation and low potentials for promotion and attracting of investors, therefore hamper further development. The lack of project documentation is a consequence of poor design capacities and financial constraints preventing municipalities to entrust these tasks to the third parties. This has a discouraging effect on the financiers and very often prompts them to abandon investments. Introduction of capital investment plans, whereby selection of investment projects would be based on a long-term perspective, taking into account achievement of financial, social, environment benefits, would solve the issue.

¹ Please see Annex II for the Map of underdeveloped municipalities in Serbia

² Municipalities bordering AoR are within the first and second developmental group and for this reason they are not included in the programme.

There is a high **unemployment** rate in the South East and South West Serbia, especially among young people, Roma and vulnerable groups. The most difficult situation is in Crna Trava, Trgovište and Lebane, where the number of employees dropped by 47% in comparison to 2002. T

On average more than 40% unemployed are without any qualifications (Raška District 44%, Jablanički District 32%, Pčinjski District 47.5%, Toplički District 40.5%³), only 6.5% of population are with college or university education and 32.7% with high school education.⁴ This is also one of serious obstacles to economic development especially having in mind the capacity of local self-governments to lead coordinated responses to social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups and to promote new approaches to social service delivery in the community. The educational profile of the labour force does not correspond to the needs of the economy.

The **specific objective** of the Call for Proposals is to improve local infrastructure facilities in target municipalities. The activities will cover improvement of living conditions and economic infrastructure in the selected municipalities of Serbia.

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Overall objective

Overall objective is efficient, coherent and timely implementation of evaluation of the proposals received under the Call for Proposals “European Partnership with Municipalities”.

2.2. Results to be achieved by the Contractor

- Assessors will carry out the technical assessment of concept notes in accordance with guidelines to be provided by the Contracting Authority and which are based on the published evaluation grids. Up to 34 concept notes are expected under the CfP. Each concept note has to be assessed individually by 2 assessors
- Assessors will carry out the technical and financial assessment of full applications in accordance with guidelines to be provided by the Contracting Authority and which are based on the published evaluation grids. Up to 34 full applications are expected. Each full application has to be assessed individually by 2 assessors.
- Assessors will carry out the administrative check

These assessments will be used by the Evaluation Committee in the process of selecting the best proposals.

3. SCOPE OF THE WORK

3.1. General

The objective of the assignment of assessors is to support the CA in coherent, efficient and timely evaluation of the applications in line with the criteria set for the Call for Proposals on the basis of well documented high-quality assessment process.

³ Annual Report Municipalities in Serbia, Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia, May 2011

⁴ Please see Annex III: Number of unemployed per municipality

3.2. Specific Activities

The Team Leader and Assessors are bound by a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality⁵ to be signed before starting each phase of the assessment. If an assessor believes there might be a situation of conflict of interests in relation to one or more applicants, he/she must inform the Contracting Authority immediately. In addition, strict confidentiality is required from the experts involved in the implementation of this contract, notably on the assessments of individual applications.

(1) Role and tasks of assessors

The Call is launched as a restrictive Call for Proposals. It implies that there will be two phases of the evaluation of proposals. The first phase of the assessment will evaluate submitted concept notes, including the administrative check, as foreseen by the respective restricted procedure. The second phase will cover evaluation of full application forms, including the administrative check, submitted by the applicants who passed the first phase of the concept notes evaluation.

For each phase of the evaluation the Guidelines for assessment of Applications together with the published evaluation grids prescribe how the assessors should appraise the applications. These Guidelines will be submitted to assessors at the beginning of their task and the assessors are obliged to strictly adhere to the Guidelines provisions.

Assessors should provide written technical and financial assessments to the Contracting Authority of concept notes and full applications. (this includes the verification of the budget proposed by the applicants for the action, assessing its overall coherence and particularly its cost-effectiveness, with an emphasis on the identification of potential anomalies and/or overpriced items or budget lines).

At least 2 assessors must assess each concept note/ full application, working independently of each other. At least 1 assessor must assess each concept note/full application during the administrative check.

The assessments must be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines and instructions provided by the Evaluation Committee. These are based on the published evaluation grids in the Guidelines for applicants. The overall assessment should be based on the scores obtained under each subheading, added up by heading and the final score is the arithmetical average of the scores given by the assessors.

Each application must be assessed on its own merits and not by comparing different applications. External assessors are expected to bring their own experience of the sector and project implementation to bear in the analysis of each proposal.

The assessors may be invited to the Evaluation Committee to justify and discuss his/her assessment of the proposals.

Each expert assessor should liaise directly with the team leader only, which afterwards will liaise with the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee. The assessors are required to submit their evaluations to the Team Leader, who will provide the completed original paper (not a scanned copy) evaluation grids to the Evaluation Committee at the end of the evaluation phase.

Assessment is based on the following:

⁵ A standard document will be made available by the Contracting Authority

Opening and administrative checks

Concept note evaluation

- relevance of action
- design of action

Full application evaluation

- financial and operational capacity of the applicant and its partners
- effectiveness and feasibility of the action
- sustainability of the action
- budget and cost-effectiveness of the action

Each assessor has therefore to be familiar with the Guidelines for Applicants for the relevant Call for Proposals and any other relevant document.

Assessment will notably be organised on basis of the following instructions:

- For each phase/step (i.e. Step 1: Administrative check and concept note evaluation; Step 2: Full application evaluation) of the call evaluation, the Contracting Authority will organise a briefing session in Belgrade to be attended by all assessors, in order to clarify the Call for Proposals' objectives, management structure and other particularities linked to the CALL and the specific evaluation criteria to be taken into consideration when assessing the proposals;
- The assessors must provide a comment for each score in each sub-section, and they must provide an overall comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. Eventually, the assessor must provide a justified opinion if the proposal should be proposed for financing or not;
- The assessors must ensure that their comments and scores are coherent, and that a high score is not accompanied by negative comments, and vice versa;
- The assessor is expected to bring his/her own experience of the sector & project implementation to bear in the analysis of each proposal;
 - While assessing the project concept note, the assessors are required to prepare the assessment of the relevance and design of the proposed action following the instructions of the Concept Note evaluation grid;
- The assessors will submit their evaluations (through team leader, who will compile all the assessments) to the Secretary of the Evaluation Committee (EvC). The Evaluation Committee will check the quality and coherence of the assessors' scores and comments. Should the assessments not satisfy the quality expected by the Contracting Authority, it may return the applications to the assessor for a re-assessment by the same or another expert. Each evaluation grid will be initialised by the assessor;
- Each assessor will submit a recapitulative list, duly signed, of all assessed applications mentioning the scores for each Chapter of the evaluation grid and all assessor's relevant conclusions or specific comments;
 - While assessing the full application form, the assessors are required to prepare the assessment of the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the Call for

Proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the proposed action following the instructions of the full application form evaluation grid;

- While assessing the full application form, the assessors are required to prepare the assessment of the budget, item by item, with clear explanatory notes per specific budget items analysing if they are necessary and realistic or not.
- A recapitulative list of all assessed applications mentioning the scores for each Chapter of the evaluation grid and all assessors' relevant conclusions or specific comments table with descending scores for all applications will be prepared by assessors. On basis of the duly filled assessors' evaluation grids, the Secretary of the EvC will establish recapitulative tables mentioning the scores for each Chapter of the evaluation grid and the assessors' relevant conclusions or specific comments. These tables will be submitted to the EvC at the end of each evaluation phase for decision.
 - While checking the eligibility of the provisionally selected applications, the assessors are required to prepare the verification of the eligibility of the applicants, affiliated entities and the action to the eligibility criteria of the Call for Proposals, checking conformity of the Declaration by the Applicant with the required supporting documents and following the criteria set out in the Guidelines for Applicants;
- Assessors are expected to provide briefing on the outcome of the assessment / evaluation to the EvC after each phase of the evaluation.

The external assessments will be considered by the Evaluation Committee. The proposals that have highest average scores will be taken forward to the second phase / considered for financing.

The evaluation of the Concept notes with the report to CA must be completed by end June 2015.

The evaluation of Full Applications with the report to CA must be completed by 31 January 2016

(2) Role and tasks of the assessor acting as the Team Leader

One of the assessors will take over the role of the team leader.

The team leader is in charge of coordinating the assessments and of undertaking the overall quality checks of the concept notes and full applications, without compromising the principle of individual assessments. The team leader should ensure that every assessor is familiar with the relevant working documents provided the Contracting Authority such as the Guidelines for applicants and the Guidelines for Assessors, which provide for the application of a standard methodology when evaluating the applications.

The team leader is the sole interlocutor between the assessors and the Contracting Authority /Evaluation Committee.

The team leader should ensure that the evaluation grids and standard format are strictly followed, agreed deadlines respected and the evaluation reports are in conformity with the evaluation guidelines. The team leader should pay special attention to the fact that the written appraisals are consistent and coherent with the given score under each section of the evaluation grid (i.e. that a high score is not associated to negative comments, and vice), and that they are written in a way that clearly allows the evaluation committee to use them directly in the selection process as well as for communicating the assessment results to the applicants.

The team leader should ensure as well that grids do not contain calculation mistakes and/or spelling and grammatical mistakes.

The team leader should submit all the evaluations of the proposals of each call to the Evaluation Committee.

The team leader must provide feedback in the form of a report on the evaluation exercise and/or lessons learned.

The evaluation of the Concept notes with the report to CA must be completed by end June 2015.

The evaluation of Full Applications with the report to CA must be completed by 31 January 2016

(3) Role and tasks of the Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee is appointed by the Contracting Authority comprising a non-voting Chairperson, a non-voting Secretary and an odd number of voting members (minimum of three). Its role is to advise the Contracting Authority on contract award in accordance with pre-established criteria.

The Chairperson is responsible for coordinating the evaluation process in accordance with the procedures in the Practical Guide and for ensuring its impartiality and transparency. The Secretary to the Committee is responsible for carrying out all administrative tasks connected with the evaluation procedure. These include circulating and collecting the Declarations of Impartiality and Confidentiality and keeping the minutes and any other relevant records and documents.

Where the proposals received are particularly numerous or highly technical, all or part of the detailed examination may be carried out by assessors so that the Evaluation Committee may conduct its deliberations on the basis of their assessments, including the opinion of the EU delegation in the country where the proposed action will take place.

Assessors work under the supervision of the Chairperson of the Evaluation Committee. Should the assessments not satisfy the quality expected by the Contracting Authority, it may return the applications to the contractor and ask for a re-assessment by the same or another expert.

4. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

4.1. Location

4.2. Location of the assignment will be in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia.

4.3. Start Date and Period of Implementation

The Contract is expected to last from 1 May 2015 to 28 February 2016.

5. REQUIREMENTS

5.1. Staff

It is expected that each assessor will assess six concept notes per working day and three full applications per working day. Four working days are envisaged for administrative check and 6 working days for reporting.

5.1.1. Assessors

The Contractor Authority will hire 4 assessors, one will take the role of the Team Leader

a. Education

- Bachelor degree in Engineering/technical, Economics or Social Sciences is required
- Master degree would be considered as asset

b. Work Experience

- A minimum of two years of relevant professional experiences in the assessments and project management is required
- Relevant experience in the evaluations of EU Grant Scheme Calls in the role of Assessor or Evaluator would be a significant asset

c. Key Competencies

- Fluency in English
- Strong understanding of Serbian socio-economic context Strong understanding of project management principles and tools Formulates written information clearly and persuasively
- Efficient management of time, establishing clear performance goals, standards, and responsibilities

5.1.2. Team leader

a. Education

- Master degree in Economics, Management or Social Sciences
- Bachelor's degree with 2 years of additional experience may be accepted in lieu of the Master

b. Work Experience

- A minimum of two years of relevant experience in the assessment of project proposals including business development is required. Relevant work experience with EU funded projects would be a significant asset.
- Experience in managing teams and/or projects is required

c. Key Competencies

- Fluency in English
- Strong understanding of Serbian socio-economic context
- Strong understanding of project management principles and tools
- Good organizational and inter-personal skills
- Excellent presentation and communication skills
- Formulates written information clearly and persuasively
- Efficient management of time, establishing clear performance goals, standards, and responsibilities
- Ability to coordinate activities externally and internally

- Strong IT skills

5.2. Facilities

The work will be carried out in the premises of the Contracting Authority.

Each assessor must have his/her own IT equipment together with the usual IT programmes for this kind of mission and an access to internet and CD-rom. The software used by the Contracting Authority is Microsoft Word and Excel 2013.

6. REPORTS

6.1. Reporting requirements

The assessors will submit all reports to the EvC as stated above.

The assessors, coordinated by the Team Leader, will submit the final reports on execution of tasks to the Contracting Authority.

Name of report	Content	Time of submission
The Final Report on the Evaluation of Concept Notes		End June 2015
The Final Report on the Evaluation of Full Applications		End January 2016

6.2. Submission & approval of reports

The electronic version and 2 hard copies of the reports referred to above must be submitted to the Project Manager identified in the contract. The reports must be written in English. The Project Manager is responsible for approving the reports.

* * *