



TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

EuropeAid/139073/ID/ACT/Multi

1st Call for Proposals within the Cross-border Programme Serbia - Montenegro, 2014-2020 under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), allocations 2014 and 2015

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This programme is the result of a joint planning effort by the Serbian and Montenegrin governments.

The Cross Border Cooperation Programme Serbia - Montenegro 2014-2020 is going to be implemented under indirect management and managed by one Contracting Authority as defined in Article 51 of the IPA II implementing regulation. IPA II supports cross-border cooperation with a view to promoting good neighbourly relations, fostering European Union integration and promoting socio-economic development.

The Cross-border Programme Serbia – Montenegro 2014-2020 is supported under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), under which € 2.040.000,00 have been allocated for the period 2014-2015.

The Programme is implemented jointly by both countries.

In **Republic of Serbia**, the responsible institutions are:

- Government of the Republic of Serbia, Ministry of European Integration (MEI), in charge of the overall coordination of the programme, is the Operating Structure (OS) in this country;
- Government of the Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Finance, Department for Contracting and Financing of EU Funded Programmes (CFCU), responsible for all contract and payment issues, is the Contracting Authority (CA).

In **Montenegro**, the responsible institutions, which consisting the OS in this country, are:

- Government of Montenegro, Ministry of European Affairs (MEA), responsible for the overall coordination of the programme;
- Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Finance, Directorate for Financing and Contracting of EU Funds (CFCU) as the Control Body.

Moreover, the implementation of the Programme is overseen by a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) composed of representatives of both participating countries' institutions and civil society. The JMC will examine and provide an advisory opinion on the list of actions selected through this call for proposals before the grant award decision.

The CA, the OSs and the JMC are assisted by the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) which is based in Prijepolje (Republic of Serbia) with antenna office which will be established in Bijelo Polje (Montenegro) and staffed with experts from both countries. This administrative body is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Programme including provision of technical and advisory support to potential applicants and grant beneficiaries.

More details about the programming area and the related development strategy and priority measures can be found in the document called Operational Programme for the Cross-border Programme Serbia–Montenegro available for downloading on <http://www.evropa.gov.rs>, www.mep.gov.me, and the Programme website <http://www.cbcsrb-mne.org>.

Call for proposal general objective

The Call for proposals general objective is to: *contribute to economic, social and territorial development of the programme area by fostering integration, joint development and use of potentials and opportunities to make the area attractive to live and work.*

Thematic priorities and specific objectives

This Call for Proposals relates to the following *Thematic Priorities and Specific Objectives*:

Thematic priority	Specific objective
TP 1: Promoting employment, labor mobility and social and cultural inclusion across the border	1.1 Increasing employability and employment opportunities
TP2: Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management	2.2. Protection of nature resources

The Thematic priorities, specific objectives and the corresponding results that the applications submitted under this Call for Proposals must fall under, are described below:

Thematic Priority 1: Promoting employment, labor mobility and social and cultural inclusion across the border

Specific objective 1.1.: Increasing employability and employment opportunities

Result 1: New knowledge, skills and competences – Improved knowledge, skills and competence, and work experience of unemployed and employed persons to better adjust to the needs of the labor market and to exploit the employment potential in perspective sectors.

The intended change is in increased cross border cooperation between relevant actors aiming at improving access of both unemployed and employed to gain new knowledge, skills and competences sought by the labor market. This includes the development of new programmes or qualifications for which there is an evident demand (e.g. professions related to ICT sector, tourism, social services, green economy, etc). Access to lifelong learning programmes should be increased.

Focus should be put on providing facilities and capacities for the inclusion of the young, women and rural population. Opportunities to gather work experiences should be promoted through linking the business, education and research, especially by encouraging cooperation in innovation and research where future employment can be generated.

The potential for self-employment, support to individual producers who recognise opportunities for joint cooperation (e.g. cooperatives, clustering, etc.) and those supporting social innovation and development of social enterprises can be addressed jointly. Employment initiatives should primarily focus on activating local resources and promoting creation of green jobs (e.g. agriculture and processing, wood construction, sustainable forest management, renewable sources of energy, tourism, and other). It is critical that employment initiatives are developed in partnerships that will be able to sustain results after the programme support is finished. In this respect, cooperation between the public and civil sector should be thought of, in particular under employment initiatives in social entrepreneurship.

Competences of the actors creating the support environment should be advanced as well under this result.

Thematic Priority 2: Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management

Specific objective 2.2.: Protecting nature resources and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation

Result 1. Better awareness of the inhabitants and industry on the importance of preserving the environment and nature

The change is to be sought in an increased competence and environment friendly behaviour of different target groups in their everyday practice. Children and young can have a positive effect on their families. Schools, local communities, and civil society can play an important role in changing the attitudes through the use of new and innovative approaches to promote the concepts of ‘reduce, re-use and re-cycle’. Industry is a specific target groups to be addressed. Cooperation in exchange of good practices and development of joint programmes and solutions to increase environmental consciousness in the programme area shall be supported.

Result 2. Improved nature protection – Increased capacities for joint management of nature resources

Increased level of cooperation between the responsible institutions for nature protection on national, regional and local levels in the programme areas is expected. Sharing of experience and learning about joint and common problems create the basis for finding joint solutions and exchange of information related to nature conservation and protection (e.g. assessment of populations of endemic and endangered species). Potential for putting together competences, equipment and human resources and development of joint protection measures should be promoted.

Result 3. Better emergency preparedness and climate resilience – Improved level of emergency preparedness and joint risk management

Cross border cooperation in development of risk management plans and coordination of actions in emergency situation as well as capacity building should increase the preparedness of the actors and their effectiveness and efficiency in real situations. Improved climate-resilience through the implementation of adaptation measures should be pursued in all the planned actions. Priority should be placed on territories along the border (mountain areas, rivers, tangible areas such as nature parks, etc.).

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Overall objective

To recruit assessors to assist the Contracting Authority in the selection of the best-quality proposals received under *1st Call for Proposals within the Cross-border Programme Serbia - Montenegro, 2014-2020 under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), allocations 2014 and 2015* and to achieve a high-quality, complete and coherent selection process of projects in line with the criteria set in the guidelines for applicants.

2.2. Results to be achieved by the Contractor

- Assessors will carry out the quality assessment of concept notes in accordance with guidelines to be provided by the Contracting Authority and which are based on the published evaluation grids. Each concept note has to be assessed individually by 2 (two) assessors (Step 1);
- Assessors will carry out the quality 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. Each full application has to be assessed individually by 2 (two) assessors (Step 2);

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

3. SCOPE OF THE WORK

3.1. General

External assessors will be engaged to carry out detailed examination/evaluation of received project proposals under the forthcoming 1st Calls for Proposals within the Cross-border Programme Serbia - Montenegro, 2014-2020 under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II).

Assessors must familiarise themselves with the documents related to the 1st Call for Proposals as well as with the Operational Programme. The information below refers to certain key points but does not substitute a thorough reading of e.g. the Guidelines for Grant Applicants, their annexes and the FAQs published for the 1st Call for Proposals.

The proceedings of the evaluation are confidential and all parties involved are bound to adhere to the principles of confidentiality, impartiality and no conflict of interest. The assessors must sign a declaration to this fact.

Only the Chairperson of the Joint Evaluation Committee is authorised to have a contact with an applicant during and after the evaluation process. This includes communications related to clarifications, the announcement of the results of each phase as well as dealing with requests for information and questions raised by any applicant about the results.

Evaluation of project proposals will be conducted respecting relevant Guidelines for Applicants i.e. relevant check lists and Evaluation grids contained within the Application Package. To ensure impartial, professional and smooth assessment process experts will be given proper documentation and guidelines.

Any applicant whose applications have not been pre- or provisionally selected will be informed about the scores obtained in the evaluation including a breakdown by section and sub-section of the evaluation grid. They may also be given the comments and justifications provided by the assessors and/or the Joint Evaluation Committee.

Recommendations on the proposals are to be provided to the Contracting Authority by an appointed Joint Evaluation Committee, comprising a non-voting Chairperson, a non-voting Secretary and an odd number of voting members (minimum of three). The role of the assessors is to carry out all or part of the detailed examination so as to assist the Joint Evaluation Committee in its deliberations.

The Call is launched as a restricted Call for Proposals. It implies that there will be three phases of the evaluation of proposals.

The evaluation grids should be completed in English language.

3.2. Specific Activities

Assessors are bound by a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality¹ to be signed before starting 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

Assessors should provide written quality 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 (two) assessors must assess each concept note and each full application, working independently of each other.

The assessments must be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines and instructions provided by the Joint 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 Joint Evaluation Committee to justify and discuss his/her assessment of the proposals.

The assessors shall contribute to the successful completion of the evaluation process by providing:

- Qualitative evaluation of the project proposals in line with the guidelines for applicants, including the published evaluation grids, and the relevant programme documents including, evaluation of the concept note and the full application and cost effectiveness of the project;
- The assessor is expected to bring his/her own experience of the sector and project implementation to bear in the analysis of each proposal;

¹ A standard document will be made available by the Contracting Authority

- Two signed evaluation grids for each concept note and for each full application form evaluation, with each grid providing a scored assessment and textual comments.
- Experts must ensure that their comments and scores are coherent, comments must reflect scores given, illustrating the scores per question and section of the evaluation grids for steps 1 & 2;
- A list of issues per full application proposed for funding requiring clarification or amendment during the preparation of contracts, if needed;
- To take part in meetings and/or specific training sessions organized by the Programme Authorities for the execution of the evaluation tasks;
- Provide help in the preparation of the decision regarding the acceptance or rejection of the project proposals;
- Provide further additional comments in exceptional and justified cases at the request of the JMC/JEC;
- Re-assess projects upon the request of the JEC/Contracting Authority

(2) Role and tasks of the Joint Evaluation Committee

The Joint 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 Joint Evaluation 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.

Assessors work under the supervision of the chairperson of the Joint Evaluation Committee.

Should the assessments not satisfy the quality expected by the Contracting Authority, it may return the applications to the Assessor and ask for a re-assessment by the same or another expert.

In case an assessment is rejected by JEC due to insufficient quality, Contracting Authority reserves right not to approve payment for assessment of that project proposal.

4. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

4.1. Location

Meetings will be held in premises of the CFCU, Sremska 3-5, 11000 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

4.2. Start date and period of implementation

Assessors should provide their services indicatively in period 15 March 2018 to 15 July 2018 in total duration of maximum 20 working days per each assessor, unless

otherwise decided by the Contracting Authority. The evaluation of the concept notes is expected to be conducted in the estimated period from 15 March 2018 to 15 April 2018 (maximum 30 calendar days) while the evaluation of the full applications should take place in period of 15 June 2018 to 31 July 2018.

In case the first ranking expert, after evaluation of bids, is not available during implementation, contract will be terminated and concluded with second ranking expert from the evaluation process.

5. REQUIREMENTS

5.1. Staff

Assessors must have a clear knowledge of the issues being addressed by the grant programme concerned. This requires that they have read and assimilated the information in the Guidelines for Applicants and in the Application Form, as well as the relevant parts of the Programming Document for the cross-border programme.

Every assessor must sign a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality. In case that it is discovered that assessors have a conflict of interest with potential beneficiaries, they will automatically be excluded from the evaluation process.

Assessors must ensure equal treatment, in terms of assessing proposals, for all potential beneficiaries.

Assessors must not disclose information regarding the evaluation process, nor about the basis for the selection of the successful applicants, during the grant evaluation procedure nor afterwards once the evaluation process has been completed.

Assessors work will be closely monitored by the relevant Chairperson of the Joint Evaluation Committee and in case that a project needs more thorough evaluation, the Chairperson can ask for a re-evaluation of the same project proposal by a different assessor(s).

If required, assessors may be asked to perform assessment of project applications in the Ministry of Finance, Department for Contracting and Financing of EU Funded Programmes (CFCU) to respective country which is acting as Contracting Authority for the project.

As result of assessment of assessors nominated for evaluation of project proposals submitted under specific Call for Proposals, assessors will fill the assessment grid which is part of each Application Pack and give justification for each given score. Assessment grids have to be signed by assessors. Assessment grids will be treated as final reports that have to be submitted, upon which the assessors will receive their fees. Also, it is possible that assessors will be engaged in reassessment, if there is a need for that.

In order to ensure the impartiality of assessors, the assessors should be independent from the institutional structure of the Programme and other parties involved and will be required to sign a Declaration of Confidentiality and Impartiality confirming this.

For each task performed, the assessor selected must demonstrate appropriate ethical conduct and must respect the confidentiality of the information and documents to which they will have access. Furthermore, assessors may not be personally involved in project elaboration or coordination or linked to another project or activities implemented by the entities submitting project application under the Programme.

The assessors will receive written instructions related to their responsibilities during the performance of their tasks. In case of a clear disregard of such instructions, the assessors shall be excluded from the pool.

5.1.1. Assessors

Minimum requirements for candidates include the following:

Qualifications and skills:

- The experts need to have at least a university degree
- Excellent knowledge of English language (will be tested) and local languages;
- Computer literacy
- good analytical and drafting skills
- willingness to travel to the neighbouring countries, if required

General professional experience:

- The experts need to have minimum 5 years of general professional experience.

Specific professional experience:

- have a minimum 3 (three) years of relevant working experience with EU funded programmes and projects;
- 2 years proven experience in sectors relevant to the thematic priorities and specific objectives of the Call for proposal
- previous experience in project proposal assessment of EU funded programmes and projects or other donors in the Western Balkan countries and related calls for proposals will be considered as an advantage
- knowledge of IPA CBC Programmes in the Western Balkan countries will also be an advantage

Candidates will be appraised against the selection criteria based on data provided in the CV, English language will be checked during the interviews.

Interviews will aim at ascertaining the candidates' communication and interpersonal skills, Project Cycle Management and Logical Framework approach and the criteria of utmost importance for a good project.

In addition, Contracting Authority reserves the right to request documentary evidence for the experience given in the candidate's CV in any phase of the evaluation. Only experience proven by requested documentary evidence will be taken into consideration and in any case candidates will have to submit documentary evidence for the experience given in the CV before the contract signature. In case of failure to provide requested documentary evidence, second best candidate will be asked to prove experience with documentary evidence. In that case, only proven experience by documentary evidence requested will be taken into consideration.

NOTE:

The assessor cannot be a civil servant, staff of the Contracting Authority or the public administration of the beneficiary countries

Working languages: Working language of the assignment is English language.

5.2. Facilities

N/A

5.3. Incidental expenditure

The budget of TA Service Contract includes “per-diem” and “travel cost” related to assessor’s engagement.

Travel costs (per diems/daily allowance and fuel expenditure rates) will be calculated in line with the rules applied by the institution engaging the assessors.

6. REPORTS

6.1. Reporting requirements

During the evaluation process, Assessors will provide evaluation grids with scoring, justification and recommendation both electronically and in written form. The written form, signed by the expert, shall be handed over to the JEC within a given deadline for each Step.

The assessors' inputs in form of Evaluation grids will be incorporated in the CfP Evaluation Reports.

The Contractor will prepare the final report (including time sheets) on the implementation of the tasks at the end of this contract in English. The approval of the final report by the Contracting Authority will be the basis for issuing the final payment.

The required formats of the reports will be communicated to the Contractor by the Contracting Authority after the signature of the contract.

6.2. Submission & approval of reports

3 (three) copies of the reports referred to above must be submitted to the Chairperson of the JEC delegated by Head of Contracting Authority. The reports must be written in English. The Chairperson of JEC is responsible for approving the Time sheets.

7. BUDGET

7.1. Cost of services

Cost of services provided by assessors will be covered from relevant direct Service Contract concluded between EUD to SRB and Ministry of European Integration (MEI) of the Republic of Serbia under “Technical Assistance” priority of a given CBC programme.

The Assessor will prepare the final report (including time sheets) on the implementation of the tasks at the end of this contract in English. The approval of the final report by the Contracting Authority will be the basis for issuing the final payment.

The required formats of the reports will be communicated to the Assessor by the Project Manager after the signature of the contract.

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