

TERMS OF REFERENCE
for pool of Assessors under the 1st Call for Proposals for the IPA CBC
Programme Republic of Macedonia – Albania

1. BACKGROUND

➤ **Contracting Authority & Beneficiary**

The Ministry of Local Self Government

➤ **Legal Basis & Financing**

- The legal base for contracting of assessors derives from the Commission Implementing Decision C(2014)9421 of 10/12/2014 adopting a support measure for technical assistance for cross-border cooperation programmes for IPA II beneficiaries under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) for the year 2014, in which there is a specific allocation for the CBC programme between Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

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➤ **Relevant country background**

The objective of the Cross-border Programme between Republic of Macedonia and Albania is to promote good neighbourly relations, foster economic development, social cohesion and environmental development in a sustainable manner, in the mutual interest of both countries, and encourage their harmonious, balanced and sustainable development.

This is done through CfP..., until today 3 CfP have been launched, put an emphasis on the difference between IPA I and IPA II

➤ **Current state of affairs in the relevant sector**

The provisions for the implementation of the Cross-border Programme are based on the Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) and the Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external actions. Put here web reference/hyperlink

The programme implementing provisions are based on the principle of both beneficiary countries being equal partners and with both beneficiary countries having an equal role in the cross-border cooperation management structures. The joint management of the programme ensures local ownership, wider involvement, better planning and will create the base for genuine cross-border activities.

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 Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) is the administrative body of the programme responsible for its day-to-day management. The costs of the Joint Technical Secretariat and its Antennae are co-financed under the programme's Technical Assistance budget provided and related to tasks eligible for the operation and co-financed according to EU rules. The JTS consists of employees from both sides of the border, contacted by the respective OSs. The JTS is jointly managed by both OSs. The location of the JTS is in Struga, Republic of Macedonia. It has an antenna office in Elbasan, Albania.

The first Call for Proposals of the Programme under the financial cycle 2014-2020 will be tentatively launched in the first half of 2015. The Call includes annual allocation for 2014 and 2015.

This Call for Proposals covers the Programme Thematic Priorities:

1. Encouraging tourism, culture and natural heritage (TP4);
2. Enhancing competitiveness, business, trade and investment (TP7);
3. Protecting environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management (TP2);

The examination of the concept notes and full applications under the call will be carried out by assessors so that the evaluation committee of the Contracting Authority, which will carry out the opening and administrative check and the eligibility check, may conduct its deliberations on the basis of the external assessments.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

➤ Global Objective

The Objective of the contract is assisting the evaluation committee of the Contracting Authority in the evaluation of the submitted applications under the first Call for Proposals of this CBC Programme in selecting the best-quality project proposals submitted, in line with the criteria set in the guidelines for applicants of the call.

➤ Specific Objectives:

The specific objective of this assignment is to provide independent technical expertise as an assessor (non-voting member) for the grant scheme evaluation, according to the rules of the Practical Guide to Contract procedures for EC external actions PRAG http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-funding/procedures-and-practical-guide_en

More specific, the assessors will provide technical expertise to:

- Assess the quality of the concept notes for the above referenced Call for Proposals (Step 1 – evaluation of concept notes) for passing on to the next stage of the evaluation, i.e. the evaluation of full applications (Step 2);

- Assess the quality of the full applications for the above referenced Call for Proposals (Step 2 – evaluation of full applications) for passing on to the final stage of the evaluation, i.e. the evaluation of the eligibility check (Step 3);

➤ **Requested services including suggested methodologies**

The experts (assessors) must possess the technical and administrative capacities necessary to provide an informed opinion on the concept notes and the full applications concerned. They shall perform their duties in a fair and impartial manner, maintaining strict adherence to the relevant EU rules, including those on impartiality, confidentiality and conflict of interest.

The assessment may be home based.

Prior to the commencement of the evaluation procedure, the experts should have become acquainted with the Guidelines for Applicants which they will receive in advance to the realisation of the assignment.

Each expert shall fill in and sign a detailed evaluation grid for each concept note and full application proposal evaluated. These grids shall become an integral part of the Evaluation Report.

The experts shall participate, if needed, in meetings of the evaluation committee of the Contracting Authority to explain and elaborate their opinion and the marks they have awarded to the grant applications evaluated.

The Ministry of Local Self Government and the Contracting Authority with the support of CBIB+ will organise training on evaluation of the CBC projects for the selected experts prior to the start of the evaluation procedure.

The experts must sign a "Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality" for the Call for Proposals, prior to the commencement of the assessments. Any expert who has a potential conflict of interest with the applicants and/or co-applicant/s as well as affiliated entities must declare it immediately. He/she will have to immediately withdraw from the evaluation.

All experts are required to uphold the integrity of the evaluation process. No information about any aspect of the assessment may be disclosed to any third party outside the evaluation committee.

➤ **Assessment of the concept notes**

The concept notes having passed the Opening and Administrative check, will undergo an evaluation in respect to the relevance of the action, its merits and effectiveness, its viability and sustainability. The task of assessors consists in carrying out a written assessment of each concept note on the basis of the evaluation grid (see Guidelines for applicants).

During the Assessment of concept notes the following services are requested:

- Assessment of concept note on the basis of:
 - Relevance of the action
 - Design of the action
 - CBC Impact
- Must follow the evaluation grid published in the guidelines;
- Each concept note will be assessed by expert assessors working independently of each other;
- Experts must provide a comment for each sub-section of the evaluation grid and must provide a summary of assessments, including comments on the strengths and weaknesses for each concept note;
- Any other administrative support where requested.

➤ **Assessment of the full applications**

An assessment of the quality of the proposals, including the proposed budget, and of the capacity of the applicant/co-applicant/s and affiliated entities are required to be carried out in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the Evaluation Grid (Guidelines for Applicants).

During the Assessment of full applications the following services are requested:

- Assessment of the full application on the basis of:
 - Financial and Operational Capacity
 - Relevance of the action (*Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation*)
 - Effectiveness and feasibility of the action
 - Log frame matrix
 - Sustainability of the action
 - Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action
 - CBC Impact
- Must follow the evaluation grid published in the guidelines;
- Each full application will be assessed by experts assessors working independently of each other;
- Experts must provide a comment for each sub-section of the evaluation grid and must provide a summary of assessments, including comments on the strengths and weaknesses of each full application. Further, a list of issues per Full Application proposed for funding must be included with information on potential issues regarding the indicators and the budget costs (and their link with the proposed action) which would require a clarification or amendment during the contract preparation, if any.
- Assessors will continue to evaluate all full applications even if a full application scores less than 12 point in *Section 1. Financial and operational capacity* of the evaluation grid
- Any other administrative support where requested

➤ **Required Outputs**

1. The experts shall contribute to the successful completion of the evaluation process by providing:

- 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;
- Summary tables (in Microsoft Excel) of results of each of the evaluation stage, 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;

Assessments that are not accepted by the Evaluation committee of the Contracting authority (for example: due to poor quality, incomplete grids or arithmetical errors) will be sent back for re-assessment with an explanation of the reasons for non-acceptance. Such re-assessment will be at the assessors' expense.

➤ **Planning**

The assignment will be organised over a total of **33 working days**, tentatively distributed as follows:

DATES (INDICATIVE!)	ACTIVITY/ASSIGNMENT	INDICATIVE WORKING DAYS
August/September 2015	Concept Notes (CN) Evaluation including familiarisation with the Guidelines for applicants	22
September/October 2015	Full Application (FA) Evaluation	10
October 2015	1 Independent Assessors' Report for both evaluation phases (CN+FA) per assessor	1

Indicative working days include time for:

- Familiarisation with the Guidelines for applicants (0.5 day per expert);
- It is expected that each expert will perform 5 concept notes evaluations per day.
- It is expected that each expert will perform 3 full application evaluations per day.
- Preparation of Independent Assessors' report (1 working day per assignment).

The fees will be calculated on these allocations of evaluations per day. However please note that these evaluations should be of acceptable quality and approved as such by the Contracting Authority.

The assignment planning is envisioned as following:

- The assessment may take place at experts' home.
- For practical reasons, the daily communication between the Contracting Authority and the experts can be carried out through e-mails and phone calls.
- The Chairperson/Secretary of the Evaluation committee provides the assessors with a list of proposals (concept notes/and or full applications), which includes the following information: name of the applicant co-applicant(s) and affiliated entities, as well as the title of the proposal.
- After signing the Declaration of Confidentiality and Impartiality the assessors shall transmit the signed documents to the Chairperson/Secretary of the Evaluation committee, first via e-mail, hard copy to follow. Transmission should be done before the start of the assessment process. Any expert who has a potential conflict of interest due to a link with any applicant must declare it and immediately withdraw from the evaluation.
- Chairperson/Secretary will send concept notes and/or full applications to be evaluated to the assessors via e-mail, stating the specific deadlines by which evaluation has to be finalised. The Chairperson/Secretary will be available to give clarifications to the assessors.
- The experts should provide a time-sheets on activities to the Chairperson/Secretary.
- Experts must send to the Chairperson/Secretary a signed hard copy of the evaluation grid for each assessment undertaken for concept notes and/or full applications once they have finished their assessments. The assessors should make sure that evaluations are clearly formulated, of a high technical standard and well substantiated (qualitatively and quantitatively) with appropriate supporting comments.
- The assessors shall transmit the completed evaluation grids to the Chairperson/Secretary, first via e-mail, and immediately after by courier or hand-delivered.

NOTA BENE

As the duration of the assignment and working days will be spread over a period of several months, it is crucial that the experts must be available without any reservations throughout the duration of the assignment.

3. EXPERTS PROFILE

3.1 Number of requested experts by category and number of working-days per expert

A pool of assessors will be contracted to carry out the assessment of project proposals received under the Calls for Proposals.

The merits of the proposed assessors will be evaluated by the evaluation committee according the following grid:

Experts	Points per expert	Percentage (Total 100%)
Assessor	Total 100	20% Education; 30% General Experience

		50% Specific experience
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3.2 Profile and/ or expertise required (education, experience, references and category as appropriate)

Pool of Experts – Assessors (in each of the Programme Thematic Priorities see above priorities of the Call for proposals)

Qualifications and skills

Education at least up to University degree (where a university degree has been awarded on completion of four years study in a university or equivalent institution) in the field related to the call for proposals (s see thematic priorities under the section **Current state of affairs in the relevant sector**) or equivalent. In case of no University degree, 4 years of experience above the minimum general professional experience requested below.

General Professional Experience:

At least 4 years of general working experience.

Specific professional experience

- At least 2 years of specific working experience related to the thematic priorities of the call (see thematic priorities under the section **Current state of affairs in the relevant sector**).
- Experience in grant scheme evaluations (as evaluator or assessor) of applications of at least one (1) Calls for Proposals funded under national or international donor.

Value added experience:

- Experience as assessor or evaluator in the evaluation of EU funded Call for proposals evaluations would be considered as an asset.
- Experience related to the thematic priorities of the call (see thematic priorities under the section Current state of affairs in the relevant sector) in the beneficiary countries (see title of this ToR) would be considered as an asset

Language and Computer Skills

- Excellent command of English, oral and writing, and computer literacy with accent on Microsoft Excel Program is a must.

Civil servants and other staff of the public administration (be it in the beneficiary country or outside of the beneficiary country) cannot be recruited as experts. Respective applications will not be further considered, accordingly.

4. LOCATION AND DURATION

➤ **Starting period**

Tentative starting date is June/July 2015. The actual start will be determined by an administrative order issued by the focal point office.

➤ **Foreseen finishing period or duration**

It is expected that the inputs from the Assessors will be spread over a period of six (6) months.

➤ **Location(s) of assignment**

The assessment may be home based. The experts will liaise directly and regularly with the Chairperson/Secretary of the Evaluation committee of the Contracting Authority. If needed, the experts might be asked to be present at Evaluation committee of the Contracting Authority briefing meetings.

5. REPORTING

A final report (Independent Assessors' report) will have to be submitted after the end of the evaluation to the MoLSG and copy to the EU Delegation **The report should be written in English**, and issued in **three hard copies plus one electronic version** (MS Word format).

6. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The assessors are expected to use their own portable computer and to have access to internet.

Payment of the work of the assessors by MoLSG will be made, once the evaluation report for the Call for proposals is approved by the Contracting Authority and based on the submitted evaluation reports by the assessors.

➤ **Tax and VAT arrangements**

All EU-funded Projects are VAT-exempt. Under no circumstances VAT can be paid by a Community programme.

➤ **Other**

Nature of contract is fee-based. The estimated daily fee per assessor is **300 euro (gross)**.

7. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The application should be submitted on the following e-mail: jts_mkal@yahoo.com. The deadline for application is 5th of June, 2015.

Interested applicants have to submit:

- A curriculum vitae (CV) in EU format;
- A typed motivation letter in English;
- Proof of educational degree (copy only); and
- Reference letters of previous relevant work experience (experience not certified by a work certificate will NOT be considered).
- Certificate for previous involvement in the evaluation of the applications under the relevant Call for proposals.

These documents will form the basis of the initial stage of selection and should provide all relevant information for the position. Candidates may be asked to attend an Interview in English via Skype. The final decision on the selection will be taken by the MoLSG, the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) in Albania and the EU Delegation.