

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

Expert support for the development service e-Public Calls for non-governmental organisations

1. Background

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organization that enhances regional cooperation, promotes shared learning, and supports the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, while Kosovo* is a beneficiary. ReSPA aims to help regional governments develop better public administration, public services, and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses and prepare them for membership in the European Union.

ReSPA establishes close cooperation with ministers, senior public servants, and unit heads in member countries. ReSPA also works in partnership with the European Union, precisely the Directorate General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST), other regional actors such as OECD/SIGMA and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as well as agencies and civil society organizations. Since its inception, ReSPA, as an international organization and a key regional endeavour in Public Administration Reform, has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through on-demand support mechanisms, peering and the production of regional research materials.

The European Commission (EC) provides directly managed funds to support the ReSPA activities (research, training and networking programmes) in line with the EU accession process.

ReSPA works primarily through regional networks that operate at three levels: Ministerial, Senior Officials, and networks/working groups of experts and senior practitioners. There are four regional thematic groups: (1) Policy planning, better regulation and coordination of the Centre of Government, (2) European integration and accession negotiations; (3) Human Resources Management and Professional Development; (4) Service Delivery (digitalization and quality management).

The assignment described in these Terms of Reference will be funded under the ReSPA eGov Pilot instrument of support.

2. Problem statement and description of the assignment

The Ministry of Regional Investment Development and Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations (MIRN) seeks to modernise and streamline the process of issuing and managing public calls for NGOs. Currently, these processes may be manual, fragmented, or inefficient, which hinders transparency, accessibility, and timely support for the NGO sector.

Despite the clearly defined legal and institutional framework established by the Regulation on

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

the Procedure and Manner of Co-financing Projects and Programmes of Non-Governmental Organizations Supported by European Union Funds ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 64/2018), the process for submitting, evaluating, and contracting co-financing requests remains largely manual and inefficient. This hinders transparency, timely decision-making, and accessibility for NGOs, while also placing a significant administrative burden on the responsible Ministry.

The MIRN is well-positioned to address these challenges by fully digitalizing the process of co-financing EU-funded NGO projects, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulation. This readiness is based on several key factors:

1. Technical Infrastructure

MIRN has access to a secure and reliable server infrastructure provided by the Ministry of Public Administration, which is well-suited to host a digital platform for public calls and co-financing.

2. Digitalization Experience

MIRN has recently completed the full digitalization of the Directorate for the Registration of NGOs and Political Parties, transforming four critical registers:

- Register of NGOs
- Register of Foreign Organizations
- Register of Foundations
- Register of Foreign Foundations

This transformation included the implementation of 24 digital services, laying a solid technical and procedural foundation for additional service development.

3. Institutional Capacity and Expertise

Through its recent initiatives, MIRN has developed the necessary expertise, organizational workflows, and inter-institutional coordination to successfully manage a digital platform that aligns with the requirements of the Regulation.

Given the mandate outlined in the *Regulation on the Procedure and Manner of Co-financing Projects and Programmes of NGOs Supported by EU Funds*, and MIRN's demonstrated capacity in both infrastructure and digital service delivery, the Ministry is fully equipped to design and operate a **digital platform for public calls**. This platform would ensure:

- Transparent and timely implementation of co-financing procedures;
- Simplified access for NGOs;
- Improved administrative efficiency and compliance with the Regulation.

To address this, MIRN proposes the development of a centralized digital platform for public calls, leveraging existing government infrastructure and prior digitalization initiatives.

3. Tasks and responsibilities

The new eService for the MIRN should be developed with the primary objective of digitalising the process of application and processing of requests for public calls. This eService allows applicants to easily register their user accounts and submit applications through modern online

forms. It also enables administrative tracking, evaluation of applications, and communication regarding final decisions.

Main Objectives:

- Increased Transparency: Ensuring that all phases of public calls are visible to applicants, including submission, evaluation, and decision-making.
- Enhanced Efficiency: Streamlining administrative tasks through digital data processing and automated tracking of application statuses.
- Improved Accessibility: Providing a user-friendly interface accessible from various devices, making it easier for users to participate in public calls.

Key Features:

- **Public Section**
 - Homepage - A publicly accessible homepage providing an overview of all organisational units.
 - List of Public Calls/Announcements - Displays a list of all active and past public calls available under the selected organisational units.
 - Public Call Details Page - Shows detailed text of the selected call, including an application button redirecting users to the login page if the call is active.
- **Access Control**
 - Registration Notification Page - Users must have a registered and logged-in account. Attempts to access protected areas prompt users to log in or register.
 - Registration - Mandatory registration form requiring name, surname, email, password, and phone number, with email verification. Users can register as individuals or legal entities based on the type of application.
 - Login Page - Contains form fields for email address and password.
 - Forgotten Password - Form for users to input their email address to receive a reset link, directing to a new form for setting and confirming a new password.
 - User Data Update - Logged-in users can update personal details and passwords.
- **Viewing Public Calls**
 - Comprehensive List of Calls - Logged-in users can view a complete list of all available public calls.
- **Application Submission**
 - Application Form Pages - Customizable forms per call, including text fields, numeric fields, checkboxes, and file uploads. Mandatory fields are validated with notifications about missing inputs.
 - Saving Applications as Drafts - Allows users to save incomplete applications for later completion.
 - Application Deletion - Users can fully delete applications saved as drafts.
 - Application Submission - Official submission of completed applications. Users must review all inputs and confirm the final submission. Post-submission modifications are not permitted.
- **User Application Management**
 - List of Applications - Users can view all submitted applications and their statuses.
 - Application Details - Detailed view of each application, including evaluation scores and evaluator comments after the evaluation is complete.
 - Downloading Applications - Applications are available for download in PDF format.
- **Application Evaluation**

- Evaluators' List of Calls and Applications - Authorized evaluators and committee presidents have visibility of all assigned calls and corresponding applications.
- Evaluation Process - Evaluations are based on predefined categories and criteria. Evaluators input scores and comments for each criterion.
- Saving and Editing Scores/Comments - Scores and comments can be saved and edited until evaluation closure.
- Ranking List - Evaluators have access to ranking lists displaying overall scores and category-specific scores.
- Super Evaluation
 - Committee President's Overview - The president has access to all calls and preliminary ranking lists, updated in real-time.
 - Detailed Evaluation Review - Access to evaluators' scores and comments. Ability to provide summary comments per category and overall feedback per application.
 - Evaluation Closure - The committee president finalizes and closes the evaluation process, after which changes are not allowed.
- Project Management
 - List of Projects - Approved users can see all their projects with general project details, contracts, and OKRs.
 - Contract Management - Users can download, sign, and upload signed contracts and comment via a provided form.
 - OKR Management - Users can view and update the completion status of OKRs (Objectives and Key Results).
- Administrative Panel
 - User Management - Administrators can create, update, delete user accounts, and assign appropriate roles (Evaluator, User).
 - Public Call Management - Creating, updating, deleting calls, setting deadlines, assigning evaluators and presidents, and selecting ranking methodologies.
 - Application and Evaluation Form Administration - Automatic generation of customizable application and evaluation forms with flexible fields, steps, and conditional logic.
 - Automated Notifications - Configure automated email notifications to inform users of application status changes (accepted, rejected, etc.).
 - Administrative Review of Applications - Centralized application overview, allowing administrators to check submission statuses, document attachments, and adjust application statuses before evaluation (approve, reject, request revisions).
 - Application Ranking - Manual or automated application ranking based on scoring thresholds.
 - Legal Template Management - Management of document templates for generating decisions and contracts.
 - Decision Management - Automatic generation and customization of decisions based on legal templates, available for PDF download.
 - Contract Management - Automatic generation of contracts based on legal templates. Administrators can adjust and publish contracts, visible only to relevant users for downloading, signing, and re-uploading.
 - Project Administration - Automatic generation of projects upon application approval, adjustable and visible only to relevant users.
 - Performance Metrics Management - Tracking project progress using OKR metrics. Automatic generation if defined in the application form, with manual adjustment available via the admin panel. Published OKRs are accessible to users within their projects.

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The new eService for MIRN should be divided into four main modules, each with a specific role:

1. Public Module:
 - Accessible to all internet users through a defined public URL.
 - Provides an overview of public calls in the field of non-governmental organizations.
 - Allows user registration and submission of applications for public calls.
 - Supports multilingual access (Montenegrin in Cyrillic and Latin, English) and compliance with accessibility standards.
2. Administrative Module:
 - Available only through the gov.me network.
 - Manages the content of the public module, public calls, and user accounts.
 - Enables administrators to review and manage applications, perform administrative checks, and take further steps, such as forwarding applications for evaluation or requesting corrections.
3. Evaluator Module:
 - Provides secure access for evaluators to assess applications, with mandatory identification or registration.
 - Facilitates coordination between evaluators, the commission president, or the secretary.
 - Automatically calculates average scores and generates preliminary ranking lists.
4. Implementation Monitoring Module:
 - Responsible for tracking the implementation of approved projects based on defined Objectives and Key Results (OKRs).
 - Includes the ability to set deadlines, monitor progress, send reports, and automatically generate notifications regarding the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of contractual obligations.

This eService is designed to standardize the processes of public calls, reducing the potential for errors and improving the quality of procedures. The eService is user-friendly, with an intuitive interface adapted for use on various devices, enabling simpler and faster participation in public calls.

Based on the main elements provided, the Expert sought with this ToR is expected to perform the following tasks:

1. **Initial project meeting (1 day)**
 - Define detailed goals, scope, and specific requirements of the digital platform.
 - Meeting minutes and confirmed project scope
2. **Analysis & Design (2 days)**
 - Analyze project requirements provided by the contractor
 - Conduct feasibility analysis, assess current digital infrastructure, resources, and identify potential risks or limitations.
 - Feasibility analysis report and submit documentation for review by the Secretariat of Legislation

3. Platform Design (3 days)

- Create detailed system architecture, user-flow diagrams, and UX/UI wireframes for public, administrative, evaluation, and monitoring modules. Design blueprint document and wireframes
- Develop the Software Requirements Specification (SRS) and Software Design Documents

4. System Development (15 days)

- Design and develop the eService in accordance with the approved specifications (frontend/backend development, including online application submission module, administrative management module, evaluator module, and implementation tracking module).
- Fully developed software; interim progress documentation

5. Integration (1 day)

- Set up and integrate the platform with the existing server infrastructure (Ministry of Public Administration), implement necessary security protocols, domain, and hosting configuration. Fully integrated and hosted platform

6. Testing and Quality Assurance (2 days)

- Prepare detailed test cases
- Conduct end-to-end testing of the system
- Perform internal and external testing cycles
- Produce a Test Execution Report
- Facilitate and document the User Acceptance Testing (UAT) process

7. Training and Deployment (2 days)

- Develop a comprehensive training programme
- Train system administrators
- Provide training for end-users from the MIRN
- Deliver a detailed User Manual
- Provide complete source code and technical documentation

8. Post-deployment support: (2 days)

- Monitor system performance, provide immediate support for initial issues, and fine-tune the platform as needed.

9. Documentation preparation (2 days)

- Prepare comprehensive technical documentation and detailed user manuals.

4. Necessary Qualifications, Experience, and Skills

The expert needs to have a diverse but compatible experience related to the design and implementation of various eServices relevant for the development and implementation of public policies and/or strategies. More specifically, the expert shall possess the following profile:

Qualifications and skills:

- University Degree in Applied Computer Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Control Systems Engineering,
- A Master's Degree will be considered an asset

General professional experience:

- At least 10 years of experience with ICT tools, other IT infrastructures, and ICT systems,

Specific professional experience:

- At least 5 years of experience working in or with the public sector and related assignments/positions, as a public servant, consultant, expert, advisor, etc.
- Experience in delivering similar eServices and/or information systems.

Skills:

- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English;
- Knowledge of Montenegrin language will be considered an asset;
- Ability to prepare and deliver well-structured presentations.

Note: The expert shall not be a civil/public servant in any of the Western Balkans' administrations at the moment he/she applies.

Other:

- Proficiency in programming languages;
- Proficiency in MySQL
- Proficiency in web development
- Ability to analyze complex problems and develop efficient and effective solutions.
- Understanding of algorithms and data structures to design and implement efficient and scalable software solutions.
- Knowledge of software development methodologies such as Agile, Scrum, or DevOps;
- Understanding of object-oriented programming principles and design patterns for creating modular and maintainable code.
- Familiarity with web development technologies;
- Proficiency in database technologies, and experience with database design, querying, and optimization;
- Ability to write unit tests, perform integration testing, and debug software to identify and fix issues;
- Ability to create clear and concise technical documentation for code, APIs, and systems architecture;
- Capacity to work effectively in a team environment, communicate with team members, and contribute to collective goals;
- Capability to prioritize tasks, manage time effectively, and meet project deadlines;
- Excellent presentation and moderation skills;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English.

5. Timing and Location

The assignment foresees work from home/office and on-site in the MIRN (Podgorica, Montenegro). In addition, the MIRN will provide the necessary logistics, print handouts, flip charts, and other materials. The assignment will be performed during **July–November 2025**.

6. Remunerations

The assignment foresees engagement of up to **30 (thirty) expert days of up to 16.500,00 EUR**.

The payment will be made in one installment upon completion of the assignment. The final outputs will be subject to approval from ReSPA before the payment is executed.

Note: No other costs will be covered besides the expert cost per day. The expert cost per day comprises the expert's fee and (if needed) a lump sum covering related expenses, including travel, accommodation, local transport, meals and other incidentals.

7. Approach and Methodology

Proposals must include the approach and Methodology to be submitted by the applicant.

The written Proposal must include:

- Describe the proposed technical approach.
- Describe relevant previous experience in the field (List of similar projects made in the past with possible links);
- Describe professional/organizational capacities (in case of a team of experts: including the key project team members and relevant experts that will directly work on design, development, or content creation, if applicable);
- If the applicant will be a company, it must describe how it will address requirements listed in this TOR and provide a detailed description of the activities, reporting, and quality assurance mechanisms that will be put in place, while demonstrating that the proposed methodology will be appropriate to the local conditions and context of the work. The company must provide the name(s), CVs and other supporting documents of the expert(s) that will be deployed for this assignment.

8. Reporting and Final Documentation

The expert/company will be requested to deliver the following documents before the payment is conducted:

Outputs

- Outputs of the meetings with the responsible units;
- Documentation for the developed system, including user manuals, source code stored on the beneficiary premises, and technical documentation.

Documents required for payment

- Invoice (signed original);
- Timesheets (signed original);
- Final brief report on the assignment