

## Terms of Reference for Expert(s) for the External Evaluation

*for the project Towards Regionally based standards of occupations - TO REGOS*

**Contracting authority (Contractor):** Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)

**Project:** Towards regionally based occupational standards (TO REGOS)

**Funded by** Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with funding from Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC)

**Target economies:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia.

**Project budget:** 563,816 EUR

**Implementation period:** 20 March 2019 - 14 August 2021

### Call for Experts

**Publishing date:** 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**Submission of applications deadline:** 09<sup>th</sup> May 2021. by 17:00

**Applications** are to be sent to [office@erisee.org](mailto:office@erisee.org) with subject: Application for TO REGOS External Evaluation

**Eligibility:** Individual researchers, teams of individual researchers, and legal entities.

**Contact:** For additional information regarding the Call for Expert(s) for the External Evaluation, (potential) applicants can contact the TO REGOS overall project coordinator Ivana Živadinović ([ivana.zivadinovic@erisee.org](mailto:ivana.zivadinovic@erisee.org)).

## I Context and Background

### 1.1. Behind the TO REGOS project

The Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe ([ERI SEE](#)) is a regional platform for cooperation in the field of education and training. As an international organization ERI SEE supports sustainable education reforms through regional cooperation. It aims at fostering shared European standards in education and training for a rapid integration of its member countries into a wider European area of education, thus contributing to the success and sustainability of the EU integration process. ERI SEE takes into account both country-specific needs and demands in education reforms, as well as present trends in the development of the envisaged European area of education. Members of ERI SEE are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia. Kosovo\* participates in ERI SEE activities as an associated partner.

One of the areas prioritized by the ERI SEE is [Vocational Education and Training](#) (VET) and its modernization. To address this area, ERI SEE, in cooperation with the VET agencies and chambers of commerce (CC) in the region, gathered under the Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning ([WBA for WBL](#)), are implementing a project on the development of regionally-based standards of occupations (Towards Regionally-based Occupational Standards – [TO REGOS](#)), funded by the Austrian Development Agency with funding from Austrian Development Cooperation.

The **TO REGOS project** aims at contributing to the employability and labour mobility of young people (aged 14 – 18) by investing in quality and labour market relevance of VET in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia (TO REGOS economies). In order to support this process, it is crucial to have strong cooperation mechanisms between private and public sector in VET, and strong involvement of adequate business representatives in the definition of the skills needed on the labour market. Apart from the thematic priority areas, the project also integrates the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, social sustainability and environment sustainability.

Regional cooperation, regional initiative and regional outputs form the foundation of the project, which thematically focuses on the development of regionally based standards of occupations and standards of qualifications on national level. The occupational standards are being developed in strong partnership between business and education, thus ensuring their labour market relevance. In turn, standards of occupations make the core of standards of qualifications and consequently curricula taught at schools, which contributes to the learning outcomes being responsive to the needs of the labour market, and employability of young people.

Lastly, the project goes a step further into exploring the grounds for the development of regionally based standards of qualifications.

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<sup>1</sup> \*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNCSER 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

In more concrete terms, the project expects to result in enhanced cooperation between private and public sector in VET at regional and national level, Common Regional Framework for the development of regionally-based occupational standards, 5 regionally-based occupational standards, adoption of regionally-based standards of occupations on national level, translation of adopted standards of occupations into standards of qualifications at national level and adoption, and analysis of the feasibility of developing regionally-based standards of qualifications and action plan.

The activities planned within this project include the following outputs in the course of 26 months (or 29 months in case of extension):

**Output 1:** Increased cooperation between private and public sector supporting national activities.

**Output 2:** Methodology for regionally based occupational standards.

**Output 3:** Five regionally based standards of occupations (hotel and restaurant technician, dry construction worker, floor-layer, tile-setter and painter).

**Output 4:** Adoption of five regionally based standards of occupations.

**Output 5:** Translation of adopted standards of occupations into standards of qualifications.

**Output 6:** Analysed possibilities for regional standards of qualifications.

## 1.2 Behind the evaluation

In accordance with the [Evaluation Policy of the Austrian Development Cooperation](#) (MFA, 2019), ERI SEE Secretariat, as the TO REGOS lead partner, is tasked to implement the evaluation<sup>2</sup> of the project as an integral part of the project. The funding of the evaluation process comes from the TO REGOS project budget. The main principles of the evaluation are defined by the **Evaluation Policy of the Austrian Development Cooperation** (MFA, 2019) and [Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations](#) (ADC, 2020). According to the latter the evaluation is a 15-step process that goes through three main stages: design, implementation and utilisation (ADC, 2020).

The **evaluation accountability chain** is interlinked between three actors: the ERI SEE Secretariat that is responsible for organising and managing the process, and ensuring that the evaluation conditions are up to par enabling high-quality evaluation; the evaluation expert(s) selected via the open Call for Proposals that are responsible for producing high quality outputs in a timely manner in line with referenced documents; and donor, [Austrian Development Agency](#) (ADA) that has advising role and will comment on the main outputs of the evaluation process: Terms of Reference (ToR), Inception report and Evaluation report. The **communication chain** will be a two-way communication between the expert(s) and the ERI SEE Secretariat and a two-way communication between the ERI SEE Secretariat and ADA.

This ToR will outline the steps and procedures of the evaluation while applicants are strongly advised to consult above listed documents prior to submitting the application.

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<sup>2</sup> The term evaluation is defined as ‘the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability’ OECD (2002).

## II Purpose and Objectives of the External Evaluation of TO REGOS project

The TO REGOS project evaluation<sup>3</sup> is by type final evaluation. It is to be implemented in the period May - August 2021 by selected expert or team of experts.

The **main purpose** of the evaluation is to assess the project outputs in relation to objectives and indicators defined in the project application. More specifically, the main purpose is to assess the TO REGOS project against the 3 criteria: **coherence**<sup>4</sup>, **effectiveness**<sup>5</sup> and **sustainability**<sup>6</sup>, and in line with the following related objectives:

1. To determine the extent to which the project is complementing national regulations and policy framework and interventions in the field of VET (connected to the coherence criteria).
2. To assess the realization of project objectives.
3. To assess how much the developed outputs are integrated into the national systems, how much they are likely to continue and how well the regional mechanisms are established to enable the future development of regionally based occupational standards. (related to the sustainability criteria).

The results of the TO REGOS project evaluation will be used further by the lead and implementing partners for the purpose of learning about success and failure factors, sustainability of results, and to draw conclusions relevant for their future cooperation – be it within another project or out of the scope of a project. The project partners will reflect on the main obstacles in the developing and implementing regionally based occupational standards and work on including evaluation results in their institutional practices and institutional legal framework where applicable. Moreover, the results of the TO REGOS project evaluations should include the list of recommendations for future actions at regional level with regards to specific criteria evaluated. The purpose of these recommendations is to integrate them in the second phase of the project intervention and also to exploit it within the activities planned under the Berlin process and Common Regional Market Action Plan, which envisages as one of its goals under 8.8. Priority area Sustainable tourism,

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<sup>3</sup> **Project/programme evaluation** of a single development measure designed to attain specific objectives with a pre-specified budget and a set plan of action (project evaluation) or evaluation of a combination of measures put together to attain specific development objectives at global, regional, national or sectoral levels (programme evaluation)' MFA (2019)

<sup>4</sup> **Coherence** shows 'The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa. Includes internal coherence and external coherence: Internal coherence addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out by the same institution/government, as well as the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which that institution/government adheres. External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context. This includes complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort.' OECD (2020)

<sup>5</sup> **Effectiveness** shows „The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups. (...= We clarify that effectiveness should analyse progress towards objectives along the results chain/causal pathway. In contrast to impact, which looks at higher order effects and broader changes to which an intervention may be contributing, effectiveness is concerned with more closely attributable results.” OECD (2020)

<sup>6</sup> **Sustainability** 'The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.' OECD (2020)

the development of common occupational standards for tourism by 2023 in cooperation between RCC, CEFTA, and ERI SEE.

The users of the evaluation results are identified on two levels: primary and secondary users.

- The **primary users** of the evaluation are the lead and implementing partners of the TO REGOS project that will utilise the evaluation results for their institutional learning and in the context of planning other ADA funded projects.
- The **secondary users** are relevant stakeholders in each economy (ministries responsible for education and labour, VET providers, agencies working on the development of occupational and qualification standards) as well as other projects implemented in six TO REGOS economies in the field of VET, for practice and information sharing.

### III Scope

The evaluation will cover activities that have taken place since the beginning of the project until the time of the evaluation in two selected TO REGOS economies. More precisely the evaluation is to implement in-depth research in Albania (AL) and Montenegro (ME). It will be implemented in months 26 – 28 (May – July 2021) of the project by using mix method combining desk research, quantitative survey and interviews.

The evaluation will be guided by the possible evaluation criteria: coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability.

### IV Evaluation Questions

Possible evaluation questions in the relation to the evaluation criteria and previously defined objectives are:

#### Coherence:

1. To what extent is the project design coherent in itself?
2. To what extent is the design of the project logical and coherent with national regulations, policy frameworks and other interventions carried out by the institutions/governments involved?
3. To what extent are the regionally based occupational standards developed in line with national regulations and policy frameworks in the TO REGOS economies?

#### Effectiveness:

1. To what extent have the project objectives been achieved?
2. How effective are the established mechanisms in terms of communication, resources and current and future use?

#### Sustainability:

1. To what extent are the project outputs integrated into national systems (for example, adopted by relevant authorities)?
2. How likely is it for the project outputs to remain parts of the national systems after the project ends (for example, used as a basis for curricula development)?

3. Which prospects are there to sustainably institutionalise the regional cooperation mechanisms to develop regional occupational standards in the future (for example, communication, institutional mechanisms, agreements between the economies...)?

## V Design and Approach

The evaluation is to be based on the non-experimental design (ADC, 2020). Methodology will combine quantitative and qualitative methods by conducting:

- Desk research to explore the coherence of the project design.
- Desk research of national procedures and policy frameworks in the field of developing occupational standards in tourism and construction sector in two selected TO REGOS economies (AL and ME) and of the project outputs.
- Conducting face-to-face (F2F)<sup>7</sup> interviews in two economies (National contact points (NCPs), their hierarchies when applicable (n=6), representatives of Ministries/qualification/employment agencies/sector skills councils/other stakeholders relevant for the outputs of the project (n=4), experts for cross cutting issues that took part in the project<sup>8</sup> (n=2), external experts for occupational standards that took part in the project (n=3), two experts from Croatia and one from Serbia), internal experts for occupational standards that participated in the project (n=2), from Montenegro), representatives of the lead partner (n=3 - Project Manager, Project Coordinator, ERI SEE Governing Board member) not less than 20 structured or semi-structured interviews. The initial report (inception report) will allow for expansion of the number of interviews.
- Quantitative survey with the TO REGOS target groups and relevant stakeholders implemented using on-line tools. The quantitative survey will have two goals:
  - Goal 1: to map issues and questions as the preparation for the interviews which will allow more focused design of the interviews.
  - Goal 2: to reach all participants (people directly involved in the project) and relevant stakeholders (VET and Chamber of Commerce members, skills councils or sector councils),) from both economies and explore aspects of coherence, effectiveness and sustainability.

The evaluation is to include desk research, face-to-face interviews and quantitative surveys for 2 chosen economies, and imply an in-depth coverage in those 2 economies. The selected evaluators will be asked to develop the Inception report as the first step to elaborate on methods and define sample sizes or both quantitative and qualitative surveys/interviews. The methodology outlined in this ToR is to be further elaborated by the evaluator(s) in the inception report. This list above is to serve as a general guideline for the development of technical and financial proposal by applicants. However, the basic methodological principle of evaluation is that the data collection and analysis methods must be sufficiently rigorous to allow

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<sup>7</sup> The primary goal is to conduct F2F interviews. However, if the situation with the COVID 19 pandemic makes this goal impossible, the option of online interviews will be possible. The switch to online method will be made based on the written justification submitted by evaluators and approved by the ERI SEE Secretariat.

<sup>8</sup> Gender equality, social sustainability and environment sustainability

for a complete, fair and unbiased assessment. In addition, the ‘ADC cross-cutting issues (social sustainability, gender equality and environmental sustainability) as well as the basic principles and quality standards applying to ADA’s programme and project<sup>9</sup> design should be incorporated in the evaluation design, approach and methods’ (ADC, 2020).

Evaluation is to be conducted in line with the ADC (ADC, 2020; MFA, 2019) and OECD/DAC norms and standards (OECD, 2020). The evaluation experts will be asked to follow ethical guidelines for evaluation<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> For comprehensive outline of ADA quality documents please consult literature listed in this ToR.

<sup>10</sup> Outlined by the *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation* (UNEG, 2008).



## VI Workplan

The evaluation process will go through three phases: (1) Design<sup>11</sup> (2) Implementation and (3) Utilisation<sup>12</sup> (ADC, 2020). While the first and the last phase are implemented by the ERI SEE Secretariat the implementation phase is to be conducted by selected evaluator(s).

The IMPLEMENTATION phase consists of the following activities:

Table 1: The list of evaluation activities

No	Activity <sup>13</sup>	Role of evaluator(s)
1	The participation in the kick-off meeting <sup>14</sup>	Participation
2	The development of an evaluation matrix following the template <sup>15</sup>	Implementation
3	The development of inception report <sup>16</sup>	Implementation
4	Data collection and analysis.	Implementation
5	Development of findings, conclusions and recommendations	Implementation
6	Development of the draft evaluation report <sup>17</sup>	Implementation
7	Collection of feedback from relevant stakeholders and development of feedback matrix	Participation
8	Submission of the draft report for approval	Implementation
9	Development of the final evaluation report <sup>18</sup>	Implementation

<sup>11</sup> The **DESIGN phase** includes preparatory activities implemented by the ERI SEE Secretariat from setting the evaluation into relevant theoretical and methodological framework, to developing and publishing ToR to selecting and commissioning the evaluator(s)

<sup>12</sup> The **UTILISATION phase** is implemented by the ERI SEE Secretariat who will work on findings and develop a management response.

<sup>13</sup> For detailed description of each phase please consult **Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations** (ADC, 2020)

<sup>14</sup> **Kick-off meeting** - 'The meeting, which can be held either in person or virtually, provides an opportunity for both parties to clarify the mandate and mutual expectations and to have a substantive discussion on how the evaluation will be carried out' (ADC, 2020) The meeting will be organised by the ERI SEE Secretariat.

<sup>15</sup> **Evaluation matrix** - 'The matrix is a planning tool, which helps ensure that the evaluation will be able to address and answer all evaluation questions in a sufficiently robust manner. When developing the matrix, the evaluator(s) need to carefully review and refine the evaluation questions as stated in the ToR. They may also suggest to reformulate, regroup and reprioritise and sometimes even remove questions as long as this is justified and agreed upon with the evaluation manager and the ADA programme and project manager.' (ADC, 2020) The evaluation matrix template can be found in Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations as Annex 7 (ADC, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> **Inception report** - 'It serves as a roadmap for the evaluation and helps ensure a shared understanding between the evaluator(s), the evaluation manager and the ADA programme and project manager concerning workplan, deliverables and timeframes. Importantly, it further outlines the evaluation design and presents the data collection and analysis methods and tools to be used. The IR has yet another function: To identify potential risks and limitations along with adequate mitigation strategies.' (ADC, 2020)

<sup>17</sup> **Draft evaluation report** - 'The draft report should be well-written and carefully presented, following the report structure outlined in Annex 6 (of the Guidelines, author's note), (ADC, 2020). The evaluation report must utilise predefined templates and contain all accompanying annexes outlined in the Guidelines (ADC, 2020) including but not limiting to recommendations for lead and implementation partners.

<sup>18</sup> **Final evaluation report** - Following the compilation of feedback from the stakeholders and the ERI SEE Secretariat, the evaluator(s) will be invited to review the feedback matrix and finalise the report.



The approximation of the number of working days and deadlines per expected output is as follows:

Table 2: The list of evaluation outputs and deadlines

		Approximation of number of days	Deadlines
1.	Kick off meeting.	1	20/05/2021
2.	The evaluation matrix.	2	27/05/2021
3.	The inception report.	4	30/05/2021
4.	Data collection and analysis .	15	30/06/2021
5.	The draft evaluation report.	12	25/07/2021
6.	The final evaluation report.	3	13/08/2021
	Total	37	

## VII Requirements for the Evaluator(s)

The selected evaluator(s) will adhere to the ethical guidelines (UNEG, 2008) and Evaluation Policy (MFA, 2019) as well as to follow the Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations (ADC, 2020) and other relevant guidelines and manuals listed in the section Literature of this ToR. A gender balanced and diverse team is part of the requirements in case of offers involving more than one evaluator (ADC, 2020).

### Selection criteria for evaluators:

- Minimum of 10 years of proven experience in education policies implementation and/or development
- Proven experience in the evaluation of implemented projects (at 5 evaluations conducted as a team leader).
- Proven experience in projects implemented in the WB region.
- Proven experience in analysing WB regulations and policies.
- Proven experience in crosscutting issues (social and environmental sustainability and gender equality).
- Proven experience in qualitative data collection and analysis
- Fluent use of English language
- Fluency in one or more WB languages will be considered as an advantage.
- Experience in writing scientific papers will be considered as an advantage.
- Experience in activities connecting education and labour market will be considered as an advantage.

## VIII Specifications for the Submission of Offers

Evaluators are requested to submit a technical and a financial offer.

The **technical** offer should present an applicant or a team and describe methods, activities and resources needed for conducting evaluation. It should include the following sections:

1. Presentation of evaluator(s) - educational background, the description of working experience in relation to the selection criteria for evaluator(s). In the cases in which an application is submitted by a team of experts, a division of tasks within the team should be outlined. - Maximum **30** points
2. Proposal of methodological approach - including the description of methods to be implemented, activities (meetings, travels if applicable) the workload (number of days) per each output, the description of resources needed. - Maximum **30** points
3. Workplan outlining milestones and their deadlines. They should include activities and outputs outlined in this ToR with additional activities and deadlines anticipated by applicant(s). The workplan should comply to deadlines in
4. Table 2. - Maximum **10** Points
5. Evaluator(s) CV(s) that includes the list of implemented projects and bibliography of each team member. In the case that legal entity is an applicant, both company/research institute portfolio (relevant to the topic) and CVs of the researchers/evaluators that will perform evaluation is to be included. - Maximum **10** Points

A **financial** offer should contain the number of days for each output (

Table 2) and the expert's(s') price per day. The financial offer must comply to the deadlines in

Table 2.

The financial offer should not exceed the 25000 EUR/gross limit. The offer should outline the following costs:

The cost and the number of working days per identified output (

1. Table 2) - Maximum 10 Points
2. The cost and the justification of other costs<sup>19</sup> (communication costs, licences for software, printing costs, travel costs) - Maximum 10 Points

Both financial and technical offer will be graded. An application can receive the maximum of 100 points.

An application containing technical and financial offer must be submitted by **09 May 2021. by 17:00**. Both individual researchers, teams of individual researchers and legal entities are eligible to apply. Only completed offers submitted in time will be considered.

**Applications** are to be sent to [office@erisee.org](mailto:office@erisee.org) with subject: *Application for TO REGOS External Evaluation*. For additional information regarding this Call, potential applicants can contact the TO REGOS project coordinator Ivana Živadinović ([ivana.zivadinovic@erisee.org](mailto:ivana.zivadinovic@erisee.org)).

## Literature

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ADC **Results Assessment Form (RAF)**

[https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierung\\_Templates/Annex9\\_Results\\_AssessmentForm\\_Template.xlsx](https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierung_Templates/Annex9_Results_AssessmentForm_Template.xlsx) [25 January 2021]

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