



Terms of Reference

International Digitalization and Smart city expert

to assist **NALAS** – the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe

in the framework of

the **BACID III** project -
Building Administrative Capacities of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The BACID III Program - Building Administrative Capacities of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova, is co-funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, KDZ-Centre for Public Administration Research, ReSPA (Regional School for Public Administration) and NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe).

The main objective of BACID III is to improve good public governance in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova. BACID III activities focus on two elements of governance:

- Increasing the quality of public administration and public services with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF); and
- Decentralization and local autonomy as key elements of the “Western European Democracy Model” and guarantors for the provision of high-quality local services.

The main outcome of BACID III will be that the quality of public administration and public services are enforced and decentralization and local autonomy in the Western Balkans and Moldova strengthened. From this perspective, it is expected that decentralization and local autonomy as key elements of the “Western European Democracy Model” and guarantors for the provision of high-quality local services in the Western Balkans and Moldova are strengthened through the work of NALAS.

NALAS – The Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe brings together 14 Local Government Associations (LGAs) from South-East Europe (SEE). NALAS promotes the process of decentralization in partnership with its member LGAs and in cooperation with central governments and international organizations, considering local self-government as a key issue in the current process of transition affecting the various countries in South-East Europe. NALAS initiates and carries out regional initiatives for its members and helps LGAs to become viable representatives of local authorities vis-à-vis their central government.

NALAS today is a broadly accepted stakeholder in the South-East Europe efforts to join the European Union. NALAS has been a recognized partner of European institutions and has close cooperation with DG NEAR, the Committee of the Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and the Council of Europe. Due to the challenging situation in the Region (antidemocratic developments, slow social and economic progress, demographic changes, interfering global politics, reluctance from EU and individual members, etc.) the European Integration process is slow and support of NALAS is still needed. Strengthening the triangular partnership between NALAS, NALAS members and local/regional partners in exploring and utilizing corresponding EU funding opportunities is crucial for achieving sustainability and improvement of public services in the Region. Policy advocacy and institutional dialogue vis-à-vis EU institutions remain the most effective approach in the proactive role of NALAS in the development and implementation of EU policies towards the Region, specifically in the area of the EU integration process.

BACID III will contribute to the institutional sustainability of NALAS by strengthening its technical capacities in its core areas, in particular extending NALAS’ role in Digitalization to support the South-East European Local Governments. NALAS will also foster its role in digital transformation processes to advocate the interests and needs of its members regarding EU digitalization programs following the Digital Agenda and EU Digital Strategy with the Digital Compass topics on enhanced digital infrastructure, building new IT skills and expertise, improved e-public services and enriched digital environment for business and economy. BACID III also encompasses the activity of implementation

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support of two pilot projects and further enhancement of local public services by using smart digitalization and innovative solutions.

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Scope and objectives

The overall objective of the assignment is the enhancement of the capacities of NALAS to support the digital transformation of LGs, digitalization of local public services and implementing “smart city” innovative solutions according to the needs of LGs in the Western Balkans and Moldova, and thereby to contributing to improving local public policies and services.

The specific objectives are the following:

- Support efforts of NALAS in aiding support the digital transformation of LGs in the Western Balkan and Moldova;
- Support the analysis and assessment of digital challenges for local governments in the countries of the Western Balkan (WB6) and the Republic of Moldova and elaborate on potentials for digitalization of local public services and developing “smart cities”

2.2. Results to be achieved with the support of the expert

The institutional sustainability of NALAS is ensured and the digital transformation of local governments is strengthened by identifying the current level of development, challenges, opportunities and legislative framework for smart city and digital transformation of local governments and by providing comprehensive knowledge management tools. The expert will contribute to the study of the current level of development in digitalization on the local level and will provide technical assistance and experience exchange concerning smart local digitalization.

3. SCOPE OF THE WORK

3.1. General

The expert will contribute to carrying out the NALAS agenda in extending its role in Digitalisation to support the South-East European Local Governments (LGs) in this area.

3.2. Specific Activities

The expert will work closely with the Digitalisation officers of NALAS and KDZ. To guarantee that the differentiated needs and requirements of the Western Balkan countries and Moldova concerning local smart digitalization are properly recognized, each LGA (NALAS member) has nominated a local digitalization officer in the NALAS Digitalisation Working group and a representative from the capital city or front- runner local government in the area.

In close cooperation with the NALAS Digitalisation officer, the expert’s assignment intends to contribute to the following areas.

- I. Assist in the analysis of the assessment of digitalisation challenges and smart city implementation level, primarily based on a NALAS survey on digitalisation sent out to all NALAS members.



- II. Support the preparation of a comprehensive report with recommendations on how to improve digitalisation in local governments in the Region in order to provide (better) e-services to citizens.

3.3. Deliverables

The deliverables will include:

The expert will contribute to elaborate on a comprehensive report that provides an analysis of the assessment of digitalisation challenges and smart city implementation level in SEE, based on the NALAS Digitalisation Survey. The report will include detailed findings from the survey results, as well as recommendations for further action or improvement. Additionally, it will provide insights into how other LGs in the EU are approaching similar initiatives in order to inform best practices that can be adopted by NALAS LG members. In this context, the expert shall:

- I. Identify gaps, challenges and barriers to effectively implement/drive digitalisation in SEE local governments with a focus on the countries of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova.
- II. Provide recommendations to address these gaps and challenges. Thereby, the overarching EU strategies in this area as well as the relevant chapters in the EU accession process will be taken into consideration and good practices/experiences from local governments in EU countries will be incorporated.
- III. Contribute to the official launch of the study as a speaker.

4. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

4.1. Location

This is a regional assignment covering the region of South-East Europe. The expert may work remotely and travel as needed within the Region, on a need basis. Coordination with the NALAS Secretariat shall take place through online tools and in-person meetings.

4.2. Start date and period of implementation

The period of implementation of the contract is from 01.03.2023 to 31.5.2023. The maximum envisaged number of working days for the assignment is 7 days.

5. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EXPERT

5.1. Qualifications and skills

The expert shall possess the practical experience in the field and demonstrate the following skills and expertise:

- ✓ Education: University degree in a relevant field such as urban planning, engineering, computer science, or public policy or other relevant fields, following 5 years of relevant professional experience, OR 7 years of relevant professional experience
- ✓ In-depth knowledge in the field of digital transformation and smart cities
- ✓ In-depth knowledge of digital services for citizens provided by public administration
- ✓ In-depth knowledge on digital transformation practices and agendas of the EU and processes with candidate countries,
- ✓ Experience in strategic planning processes at local government level,
- ✓ Excellent skills in practical application surveying, report writing
- ✓ Practical experience with developing and implementing EU-funded projects is an asset,
- ✓ Previous cooperation with the EU institution is desirable,
- ✓ Demonstrated analytical and writing capacity,
- ✓ Capability to write and communicate in English is a must,
- ✓ Computer literacy, ability to present information in an appealing format,
- ✓ Demonstrated ability and willingness to work with people of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, different gender, and diverse political views.

6. CONTRACTUAL PROVISIONS

The Expert shall be contracted by the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (AACT) as the Lead Partner of the BACID III project, as support to the NALAS Secretariat.

The tasks shall be performed in close cooperation and agreement with the NALAS Secretariat, while KDZ-Centre for Public Administration Research as the implementing Austrian project partner of AACT is responsible for the final approval of deliverables produced.

7. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The interested Experts shall submit the CV and requested daily fee not later than Monday 20.02.2023 **12 am CET** at: info@nalas.eu.

The maximum level of fee foreseen for the assignment is 700 EUR per day.

Within the commitment to diversity and inclusion, qualified women are especially encouraged to submit an offer.

Questions to the ToR: Questions about the ToR shall be submitted to Ms. Jana Belcheva Andreevska, NALAS Digitalization expert via e-mail info@nalas.eu, mobile: +389 72 217 515, no later than 12 am on February 20th, 2023.