



Request for Proposals and Terms of Reference

Regional Expert/Consultant for conducting research on the collaboration and communication in the provision of water and sanitation services

1. Summary of Requirements

The Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS), within the project “Institutional strengthening of RCDN+ partner associations for sustainable contribution to the water and sanitation sector”, requests proposals from interested Consultants to conduct regional research on the collaboration and communication in the provision of water and sanitation services.

2. Invitation

Individual consultants with proven experience and expertise in conducting regional researches related to local governments’ competences in water and sanitation services are invited to respond to this Request for Proposals.

3. Request for Proposals Terminology

The following terms will apply to this Request for Proposals (RfP) and Terms of Reference (ToR) and to any subsequent Contract. Submission of a proposal in response to this Request for Proposals indicates acceptance of all the following terms:

Terminology

- a) “NALAS” means the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe;
- b) “Contract” means the written agreement resulting from the Request for Proposal executed by the NALAS Secretariat and the successful vendor;
- c) “Contractor” means the successful vendor selected from this Request for Proposal;
- d) “Must”, “Mandatory” or “Required” means a requirement that must be met in order for a proposal to receive consideration;
- e) “Consultant” means an individual that submits, or intends to submit, a proposal in response to this Request for Proposal.

4. Closing Date and Location

To be considered, proposals must be received in electronic form not later than **9 September 2024 (Monday), 16:00 (CET)** at info@nalas.eu, with Subject: Offer for consulting services for conducting regional research on the collaboration and communication in the provision of water and sanitation services.

5. Enquiries

This Request for Proposal can be downloaded from the NALAS website at www.nalas.eu. For any questions about the content of this RfP, please contact NALAS Programme Director, Ms. Jelena Janevska, at janevska@nalas.eu.

6. Ownership of Proposals

All documents, including proposals submitted in response to this Request for Proposals become the property of NALAS. However, only the submissions by the successful contractor will be used. Once a contract has been awarded, the name of the successful consultant will be available to the public upon request.

7. Project Overview

The project RCDN+ aims at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Associations of Public Utilities (APUCs) and of Local Government Associations (LGAs) in the six Western Balkan economies, which contributes to better service provision for and by their members, ultimately allowing to deliver equitable, safely managed drinking water and sanitation services to the population, in line with international standards.

The project is jointly financed by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and development (BMZ), and it is administratively embedded in the GIZ Project “Open Regional Fund - Modernisation of Municipal Services (ORF MMS)”, commissioned by BMZ.

Four key sets of activities will contribute to achieve the RCDN+ project outcomes:

Outcome 1: (Stronger associations). APUCs and LGAs are capable to perform their organisational functions in line with their mandate.

Outcome 2: (Adequate capacity development offer). APUCs and LGAs are capable of responding satisfactorily to the water sector-related capacity development needs and requests of their members.

Outcome 3: (Policy dialogue led by associations). APUCs and LGAs are recognised by competent national agencies, able to establish strategic collaborations, and to facilitate policy dialogue in order to advocate for the interests of their members

Outcome 4: (Regional services). Regional capacity development services address the needs and requests and add value to the capacity development offer of APUCs and LGAs.

Within the project “Institutional strengthening of RCDN+ partner associations for sustainable contribution to the water and sanitation sector” NALAS plans to conduct regional research that will result with policy position and practical guide for Local Governments (LGs), on one of the burning issues determined by the Working Group and LGAs’ committees. Therefore, NALAS is looking to engage a regional expert/consultant with relevant experience and expertise related to local governments’ competences in water and sanitation services are invited to respond to this Request for Proposals.

8. The Aim of the Assignment

Following the need to increase capacities at the local level including both local authorities and public utility companies to organise and provide water supply and sanitation including planning, financing, decision making, regulation, and monitoring are essential elements of the water management services Action Plan of NALAS’ Task Force on Solid Waste and Water Management - Group on Water Management for the period 2024-2025 puts the focus on the roles and responsibilities of LGs and their communications and collaboration with PUCs.

In that respect, one of the main activities foreseen by the Action Plan is devoted to the regional research on the collaboration and communication in the provision of WSS, to ensure strategic management of these key local public services, as well as efficient and effective service provision, maintenance, and investment.

The research will tackle several important topics: the roles and responsibilities of LGs in the provision of WSS, their oversight role over the work of the PUC, and their participation in regional water service provision. It will also focus on the collaboration and communication between LGs and PUCs, and citizen participation in shaping these services. The research will cover Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

The research will focus on the services solely provided by LGs, but not undermine the trend of regionalisation of water services. In some SEE economies, this process has been already implemented, in some - it is in the implementation phase, while in others it is announced. The research will explore the practices throughout the region vis-à-vis the conventional right to local autonomy guaranteed by the European Charter on Local Self-Government. Also, it will provide further recommendations for the associations of local authorities for further empowerment of LGs in the provision of water and sanitation services, regardless of the model used.

The research will result with focused policy position and practical guide for LGs and LGAs for advancing the collaboration and communication in the provision of WSS services.

9. Activities, deliverables, timeframe and expert days under the contract

Activity	Deliverables	Timeframe	Expert days (up to)
Development of a research methodology	Draft research methodology plan	15-25 September 2024	2 days
Piloting the methodology in one economy	National research report	25 September -20 October 2024	6 days
Adjusting the methodology (if needed) and development of a ToR for national experts	Final research methodology plan ToR for national experts	20-25 October 2024	1 day
Coordinating the work of national experts	National research reports	1-20 November 2024	2 days
Preparation of a regional report	Regional report	20 November-15 December 2024	3 days
Preparation of a policy position	Policy position	15-20 December 2024	1 day
Preparation of a practical guide	Practical guide	20-30 December 2024	3 days
	Total		Up to 18 days

All deliverables under this ToR should be approved by NALAS Programme Director.

10. Proposal submission

The complete proposal submitted by the consultant shall include the following elements:

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Technical Offer:

- a) Cover Letter, explaining consultant's suitability for the assignment, as specified in this RfP.
- b) Proposed approach, including research focus, approach, methodology and timeframe.
- c) Detail CV of the consultant. The CV shall clearly demonstrate how the consultant meets the criteria stated under Chapter 11.

Financial Offer:

- d) Financial offer, including the number of expert days for the assignment, fee per day and total amount. The prices should be gross and stated in euros. Gross amount should include the personal income taxes and other taxes obligatory under the laws of the Republic of North Macedonia (at the moment 10% from the gross amount) and will be calculated and paid by NALAS. The Consultant will receive the amount reduced for the paid personal income tax.

11. Technical or professional ability of the Consultant

To qualify as capable of performing the contract in terms of its technical and professional qualifications, the consultant must meet the following requirements:

- Experience in conducting at least 5 national and 3 regional researches related to local government
- Experience in developing at least 5 policy positions or guides related to local government competences
- At least 10 years of experience in the field of environment, more specifically in the water and sanitation sector
- At least 15 years of experience related to the system of local self-government in the Western Balkans region
- Understanding of the mandate and work of the Local Government Associations in the region
- Knowledge of the languages of the region
- Excellent written and spoken English

12. Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Evaluation of proposals will be undertaken by NALAS Evaluation Committee. The proposals will be evaluated and rated based on the criteria set out in this RfP. In order to do so:

- The proposal must be submitted in English;
- The proposal must be submitted by the stated deadline;
- The proposal must clearly list, in details, what services will be provided with the associated costs for each component;
- The proposal must be complete, containing all the elements listed in Chapter 10 of this RfP.

The Evaluation Committee will evaluate the proposals based on the following criteria:

- 40% Consultant's Capacity: relevance of consultant's expertise and experience for fulfilling the tasks under this RfP. Previous experience with NALAS and familiarity with NALAS and RCDN capacity development approach and quality standards will be considered as an asset;
- 30% Technical Offer: proposed approach including draft training and meeting agenda and methodology;
- 30% Financial Offer.

13. Terms of Payment

The payment will be made after completing the assignment and approval of all deliverables, as described in Chapters 8 and 9 of this RfP, as well as submitted and approved time-sheet. *(to be submitted no later than 30 December 2024).*

14. Modification of Terms

NALAS reserves the right to modify the terms of the RfP at any time at its sole discretion.

15. Consultant Expenses

Consultants are solely responsible for their own expenses in preparing a proposal and for subsequent negotiations with NALAS. Short-listed proposals may be asked to make a presentation to the Evaluation Committee, which will be solely at the Consultants own expense.

16. Acceptance and Rejection of Proposals

NALAS may not necessarily accept the lowest priced proposal or any proposal. At its sole discretion, NALAS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received and to accept any proposal which it considers advantageous, whether or not it is the lowest priced proposal. NALAS is not under any obligation to award a contract, and reserves the right to terminate the Request for Proposal process at any time, and to withdraw from discussions with all or any of the Consultants who have responded. NALAS reserves the right to accept the proposed offer in total or in part, to reject any or all offers, to waive any minor informalities, irregularities, or technicalities, and to accept the offer deemed most favourable to the Network.

17. Contract Negotiation

NALAS reserves the right to negotiate specific terms of the contract with the short-listed proponents prior to the final award of the contract. NALAS also reserves the right to negotiate specific terms of the contract with the Contractor as the contract progresses.

18. Ownership

All materials, documents and information prepared, developed or adjusted by the contractor for the purposes of realisation of the assignment under this ToR, remain the property of NALAS. The contractor agrees that no part of the training materials, documents and information may be reproduced or distributed in any form, or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, for any other purposes and objectives than those related to this ToR.

Thank you for your interest in submitting a proposal. It is hoped that the information provided is of value and should anything be unclear, please contact NALAS directly.