

Request for Proposals and Terms of Reference

For National expert for conducting research on the collaboration and communication in the provision of water and sanitation services in Albania

1. Introduction

Municipalities and public water utilities in the Western Balkans face major challenges in providing sustainable water and sanitation services (WSS) and meeting the requirements of the European Union *Acquis Communautaire* (Chapter 27). Most of the municipalities are the owners of the public water utilities: they take through the Board all the important decisions related to the company. Thus, introducing modern management standards in public water utilities and improving service delivery towards better compliance with standards requires a prior understanding of goals and priorities by the Board members representing the municipalities and municipal decision-makers. A well-functioning cooperation between the municipal decision-makers and the management of the public water utilities is needed. Strengthening their capacities in parallel helps foster collaboration between key municipal and water utility stakeholders.

Following NALAS Strategic Plan 2023-2027, NALAS Regional Water Management Policy Position Paper, and the activities foreseen in the Action Plan of NALAS' Task Force on Solid Waste and Water Management - Group on Water Management for the period 2024-2025, NALAS aims to conduct 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 is to tackle topics such as local self-governments' (LSGs) roles and responsibilities in the provision of WSS and their practical execution, water services oversight, collaboration and communication between LSGs and public utility companies (PUCs), inter-municipal cooperation in the provision of WSS services, the role of LSGs in regional water services and citizen participation in shaping WSS services, in Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo ¹, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The Regional Research is implemented within the project “Regional Capacity Development Network for Water and Sanitation Services (RCDN)”, supported by SECO and BMZ/GIZ.

These Terms of Reference (ToR) outline the **assignment for national expert who will research collaboration and communication between LSGs and PUCs in the provision of water and sanitation services in Albania** following the Research Methodology developed by the Regional Expert, and thus contribute to the Regional Report and formulation of policy positions, recommendations, and practical guidelines for LSGs and their associations for lobbying towards improved collaboration and communication in the provision of water and sanitation services in the Region.

2. Invitation

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

3. 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 Project Officer, Mr. Aleksandar Spasov, at spasov@nalas.eu.

4. Background and objectives of the assignment

Following the need to increase capacities at the local level including both local authorities and public utility companies to organize and provide water supply and sanitation including planning, financing, decision-making, regulation, and monitoring are essential elements of the water management services the 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 LSGs 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 tackles several important topics: the roles and responsibilities of LSGs 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 LSGs and PUCs, and citizen participation in shaping these services. The research will cover Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

The research will focus on the services solely provided by LSGs, but not undermine the trend of regionalization 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 LSGs in the provision of water and sanitation services, regardless of the model used.

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

5. Expert’s specific tasks

The tasks of the National Expert include:

- Translating and adapting the Research Methodology (survey approach, survey questionnaire, sample, interview/focus group approach, and interview/focus group questions) to the national language and context.
- Conducting the research in the context of the Albania.
- Compiling National Research Report in English language.
- Drafting recommendations regarding communication and collaboration between LGs and PUCs in Albania in English language.

The Regional Expert and NALAS staff will provide the necessary advice in the execution of the tasks of the National Expert.

6. Deliverables, timeframe, and expert days

Deliverables	Expert days
Adapting the Research Methodology (survey approach, survey questionnaire, sample, interview/focus group approach, and interview/focus group questions) to the national context. Translating the survey questionnaire and the interview/focus group questions.	1 day
Conducting the research in the context of Albania	6 days
Compiling National Research Report in English language	2 days
Drafting recommendations regarding communication and collaboration between LGs and PUCs in Albania in English language	1 day
Total	10 days

All the aforementioned services should be completed **until 15 January 2025** the latest.

All deliverables listed above should be approved by NALAS.

More precise timeline of deliverables will be defined in the contract and throughout the project implementation.

7. National Expert Profile

The National expert shall have the following competencies and skills:

- Experience in conducting at least 3 national researches related to local government
- At least 5 years of experience in the field of environment, more specifically in the water and sanitation sector
- At least 5 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

8. Proposal submission

To be considered, proposals must be received in electronic form not later than **4 December 2024 (Wednesday), 16:00** (CET) at info@nalas.eu, with Subject: Offer for consulting services for conducting national research (in: name of the country).

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

Technical Offer:

- a) Cover Letter (max. 1 page), explaining consultant's suitability for the assignment, as specified in this RfP.
- b) Detail CV of the consultant. The CV shall clearly demonstrate how the consultant meets the criteria stated under Chapter 7.

Financial Offer:

- c) Financial offer, for 10 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 Macedonian (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.

9. Terms of Payment

The payment will be made after completing the assignment and approval of all deliverables, as described in Chapters 5 and 6 of this RfP, as well as submitted and approved time-sheet.

10. Modification of Terms

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