

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Engagement of Regional Expert for Conducting a Study on Social Service Decentralization in Georgia

Ref. No.: PSGA4 – P2

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Project Title: PLATFORMA

Contracting Authority: Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe

Donor: EU and SDC through institutional support for NALAS.

1. Background

PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of local and regional governments engaged in international cooperation for sustainable development. PLATFORMA federates local and regional governments with their national, European and global associations, and is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

NALAS is a network of associations of local authorities of South-East Europe (SEE). The Network brings together 14 Local Government Associations (LGAs) which represent roughly 9000 local authorities. NALAS promotes the process of decentralisation in partnership with its member LGAs and in cooperation with central governments and international organisations. 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. With the support of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), NALAS co-finances activities under PLATFORMA.

In the framework of the PLATFORMA Eastern Partnership (EaP) Programme, NALAS is supporting the advocacy efforts of the LGAs of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. Supporting effective policy dialogue at national and international levels as well as the institutional development of the Associations of Local Authorities in the EaP countries are key priorities for PLATFORMA.

As Georgia's 2020–2025 decentralization strategy nears completion, key responsibilities have already been transferred to local authorities. With the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) set to develop a new decentralization strategy in 2025, there is an urgent need for evidence-based input on the transfer of social services responsibilities to the local level.

To support effective policy dialogue in Georgia, in the framework of PLATFORMA, NALAS and NALAG (National Association of Local Authorities Georgia) will cooperate to develop a study to analyze the transfer and decentralization of social services and draw lessons learned from the experience of decentralized social service provision in South-East Europe. The study aims to support advocacy efforts of NALAG and informed policy dialogue and strategic planning for the next phase of decentralization reform in Georgia. The study can also help inform discussions over shifting responsibilities for social services are relevant in several other European countries.



2. Objective of the Assignment

The overall objective of this assignment is to conduct a comprehensive study on the decentralization of social services in Georgia, with comparative insights from a relevant South-East European (SEE) country. The study will assess which services are best managed at the central level and which can be transferred to local authorities as delegated or exclusive (own) responsibilities, based on criteria such as accessibility, quality, equity, efficiency, governance capacity, and financial feasibility.

The Regional Expert will assist the contracted Lead Expert in achieving the following specific objectives:

- Identify key factors influencing the transfer of social services to the local level in Georgia.
- Compare Georgia's approach with another relevant country in terms of efficiency, equity, and governance capacity.
- Determine which social services could be transferred to local governments, based on comparative lessons.
- Assess the challenges and benefits of decentralizing social services in Georgia based on international best practices

3. Scope of Work

The Regional Expert shall be responsible for:

1. Conducting a literature and policy review of social service decentralization in a selected SEE, including the key factors shaping the transfer of social services from the central to the local government level.
2. Contribute to the comparison of Georgia's approach to social service decentralization with relevant SEE country
3. Contribute to the development of the conceptual framework for decentralization of social services in Georgia through lessons learned from relevant SEE country.
4. Contribute to the review and development of key findings and recommendations for service decentralization

4. Deliverables

The Regional Expert will support the Lead Expert in developing the following deliverables:

- **Inception Report:** Methodology, timeline, and data collection tools.
- **Interim Report:** Summary of early findings and emerging recommendations.
- **Draft Final Report:** Full study, including analysis, comparative insights and recommendations.
- **Final Report:** Revised version incorporating stakeholder feedback.
- **Presentation:** Summary of key findings for use in advocacy and policymaking.

5. Outline of the Study Report

The final study report should follow the structure below (subject to refinement during the inception phase):

Executive Summary

- 1. Introduction** - Background, objectives, methodology
 - 2. Overview of Social Service Provision in Georgia** - Institutional setup, legal framework, financing
 - 3. Rationale for Social Service Decentralization** – Drivers, role of local governments, expected outcomes
 - 4. Comparative Analysis: Case of [Selected Country]** – Reform process, governance, roles and responsibilities, financing models, lessons learned
 - 5. Typology of Decentralized/Delegated Social Services** – Classification and assessment of services suitable for decentralization/delegation and criteria
 - 6. Stakeholder Perspectives** - Feedback from government, LGAs, CSOs
 - 7. Challenges and Opportunities in Georgia** - Legal, administrative, financial, equity
 - 8. Conclusions and Recommendations** - Policy options, priorities, capacity needs, short- and medium-term priorities
- Annexes** - References, stakeholder list, protocols, summary tables

6. Location

The assignment shall be conducted remotely, including possible online or in-person consultations. Remote meeting(s) with stakeholders in Georgia will be coordinated with NALAS and NALAG as per the project needs. The Contracting Authority will not cover cost related to travel and accommodation.

7. Duration and Timeline

Total estimated duration: **5 working days.**

Tentative timeline: **1 August – 28 December 2025.**

Phase	Activities	Timeline
Month 1	Literature review, conceptual framework, inception report	August & September
Month 2	Stakeholder consultations, data collection, interim report	October
Month 3	Comparative analysis, draft report preparation	November
Month 4	Stakeholder presentation, finalization and submission	December

The duration and timeline may be revised by NALAS as per the needs of the implementation.

8. Methodology

The expert will use a mixed-method approach combining:

- **Desk Review:** National policies, decentralization frameworks, and relevant laws.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Review of social service decentralization in a selected country.
- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Interviews and focus groups with MRDI, NALAG, local governments, CSOs, and experts.
- **Case Studies:** Examples of successes or challenges in Georgia and the comparator country.

All steps will be undertaken in coordination with NALAS and NALAG.

The study will address the following key **research questions**:

- What are the key factors influencing the delegation of social services between central and local authorities in Georgia?
- How does Georgia’s approach to social service decentralization compare to that of (e.g., Albania, Croatia, Serbia or Romania)?
- Which social services should remain centralized, and which should be delegated to local governments in Georgia?

- What are the challenges and benefits associated with decentralizing social services in Georgia, and how do they compare with experiences from other Eastern European countries?

9. Required Qualifications

Qualifications and skills:

- Advanced degree in public administration, social policy, governance, or a related field.
- Fluency in English is required.
- Strong analytical, facilitation, and writing skills.

General Work Experience

- At least 10 years of proven work experience.

Specific Work Experience

- At least 7 years of experience in decentralization, local governance, or social service delivery.
- Demonstrated experience conducting policy research and comparative analysis.
- Familiarity with Eastern Europe countries is an advantage.

10. Reporting and Supervision

The experts will report to the NALAS designated Program manager. The experts will work in close coordination with representatives of NALAS and PLATFORMA secretariat for input and feedback.

11. Budget and Payment Schedule

Payment will be made in one instalment: 100% upon submission and approval of the final report.

12. Modification of Terms

NALAS reserves the right to adjust the scope, timeline, and deliverables of the assignment in consultation with the expert, based on evolving needs or constraints during implementation.