

Request for Proposals and Terms of Reference

Team of Regional Experts/Consultants on the role of local authorities in implementation of the Reform Agendas in the Western Balkans

1. Summary of Requirements

The Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS), within the EU-Council of Europe joint programme “LORAI – Local Observatory on Reform Agendas Implementation in the Western Balkans”, requests proposals from interested Teams of Regional Experts/Consultants to conduct a regional research and follow-up activities on the role of local authorities in implementation of the Reform Agendas in the Western Balkans.

2. Invitation

Teams of up to three regional individual experts/consultants with proven regional experience and expertise in EU relations, EU integration of the Western Balkans, local government competences, and conducting regional researches in these topics 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) “Regional Expert/Consultant” means a team of up to three individuals/natural persons 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 **13 May 2026 (Wednesday), 16:00 (CET)** at info@nalas.eu, with Subject: Offer for consulting services on Reform Agenda.

5. Enquiries

This Request for Proposal can be downloaded from the NALAS website at [Announcements – Nalas](#). 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

LORAI is a joint European Union–Council of Europe programme that aims to enhance the role and capacities of local authorities in the Western Balkans in implementing and monitoring the Reform Agendas under the EU's Reform and Growth Facility, a key element in the region's path towards EU accession.

LORAI is implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in partnership with NALAS, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and Local Government Associations (LGAs) in each Beneficiary.

LORAI objectives:

- Strengthen the monitoring process of Reform Agendas implementation, by enabling meaningful and effective participation of local authorities in the reform process.
- Increase engagement and advocacy capacity of local authorities by empowering them to actively influence the design, implementation, and monitoring of reforms, and propose policy and investment priorities for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

The success of the Reform Agendas requires institutions at every level to effectively implement and monitor them; however, recent assessments reveal that local authorities are only limitedly involved in these processes.

To address this gap and to strengthen reform effectiveness, foster public trust and accountability, the programme will:

- Establish an open-access dashboard that presents the impact of reform implementation at the local level
- Reinforce principles of inclusive multilevel governance and dialogue-building among all levels of government and
- Advance regional peer learning and knowledge sharing.

Programme activities will include development of a dashboard, focus group meetings, a regional conference, dialogue-building workshops, peer reviews, Multiannual Financial Framework labs, regional peer exchanges, and drafting of recommendations for policy development and implementation under reform agendas.

LORAI is anchored in the Western Balkans Growth Plan and aligns with [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1449](#), which emphasises inclusive reform implementation and meaningful local government participation.

The programme is based on the principles of the [European Charter of Local Self-Government](#), a Council of Europe treaty which lays down standards for protecting local and regional democracy in Europe.

8. The Objectives of the Assignment

Within the LORAI project, NALAS is responsible to design, develop, operate, and maintain the LORAI open-access dashboard, that presents the impact of Reform Agendas implementation at the local level. The dashboard will be based on relevant set of indicators, developed considering

the identified needs of local authorities in each of the six Western Balkans economies – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as their respective LGAs. In this direction, the **aim of the assignment is to set the basis for the LORAI dashboard**, through:

- **Conducting a baseline study** on the level of involvement of local authorities in implementing the Reform Agendas, which identifies key thematic areas with significant local impact;
- **Identifying set of indicators**, based on the existing monitoring and evaluation systems within each economy, for inclusion in the LORAI monitoring and evaluation framework;
- **Developing guidelines** for the collection, analysis and reporting of data for the LORAI monitoring and evaluation framework (LORAI dashboard);
- **Delivering a regional workshop** for finalisation of the guidelines, development of the structure of LORAI dashboard and preparation for data collection.

The baseline study on the involvement of local authorities in implementing the Reform Agendas is expected to combine desk and field researches, analysing available data and reaching out to local authorities, their associations, as well as relevant national and regional stakeholders. The baseline study should clearly indicate, mainly by hearing the voices of local governments, how much local governments know about Reform Agenda, how much they were consulted in its development, what role they have and could possibly have in its implementation. The baseline study should build on the recently published report of the European Committee of the Regions "The local and regional dimension of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans", available on the following [LINK](#). The baseline study should also consider the initiatives of civil society in monitoring the Reform Agenda throughout the region.

The baseline study and the subsequent set of activities should explore (not limited to) the following questions:

1. Which are the key thematic areas of the Reform Agendas with significant local impact, and where should local authorities be involved?
2. Which indicators should be monitored?
3. What are the financial implications of the Reform Agenda steps on local authorities?
4. How could local authorities better support the Reform Agendas in the respective economies, strengthen their ability to provide technical input, and advocate for their engagement in decision-making?

The draft questions referred to above will be further developed by the Regional Expert/Consultant as part of the methodology.

In collaboration of the Regional Expert/Consultant and local experts that will be engaged by the LGAs to support the methodology developed at regional level, the baseline study will result with **identified set of indicators** in the thematic areas of the Reform Agendas with the biggest local impact in each Western Balkans economy.

Building on already established indicators, the Regional Expert/Consultant will further refine and break them down into more specific indicators from a local government perspective. In addition, the Regional Expert/Consultant will develop a system for data collection and reporting by LGAs, ensuring that data are collected at the local level rather than by central government institutions. These indicators, together with relevant local government metrics and the national LGA monitoring processes, will serve as the basis for further discussions on the development of the LORAI dashboard. The data collection and reporting process should be synchronised, in terms of both dynamics and content, with national Reform Agenda monitoring systems. Throughout this process, regional commonalities should be identified to support regional reporting, peer learning, and policy dialogue.

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

As the partner LGAs in each economy will have a key role in data collection for LORAI dashboard, the regional expert is expected to **develop guidelines** for the collection, analysis and reporting of data for the LORAI monitoring and evaluation framework.

The regional workshop will gather project partners to present the baseline study findings, consult the LGAs' leadership on the draft guidelines, data collection, analysis and reporting process, as well as the preferred organisation (structure) of the dashboard. The workshop will be logistically organised by NALAS, while it will be designed and delivered by the Regional Expert/Consultant.

With the completion of the assignment, NALAS and the LGAs will be able to proceed with developing the dashboard and commencing with data collection.

9. Activities, deliverables and deadlines under the contract

Activity	Deliverables	Deadlines
Development of a baseline study methodology	Baseline study methodology	Until 20 May 2026
Conducting the baseline study	Baseline study activities documentation (i.e. survey, interviews, etc.)	Until 20 June 2026
Preparing baseline study report	Baseline study report, including relevant annexes	Until 20 June 2026
Defining set of monitoring indicators for each economy	Set of monitoring indicators for each economy	Draft until 1 July Final until 15 July
Developing guidelines for data collection, analysis and reporting	Guidelines for data collection, analysis and reporting ToR for creation of the dashboard	Draft until 1 July Final until 15 July Until 15 July
Preparation and delivery of a regional workshop	Workshop agenda Workshop design Workshop report with relevant annexes	2-3 July 2026 10 July 2026

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

In planning the methodology and workload, the Regional Expert/Consultant should take into account that support will be provided through local expertise for mapping of the monitoring system for the implementation of the Reform Agendas in each beneficiary, data collection and development of indicators at national level. This local expertise should not form part of the contract related to this RfP.

The Regional Expert/Consultant will closely coordinate with the international expert engaged by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to ensure alignment with LORAI programme objectives.

10. Proposal submission

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

Technical Offer:

- a) Cover Letter, explaining Regional Expert/Consultant's suitability for the assignment, as specified in this RfP.
- b) Proposed approach, including baseline study and related activities' focus, methodology and timeframe.

- c) Detail CV of each member of the team of Regional Experts/Consultants. The CV shall clearly demonstrate how they meet the criteria stated under Chapter 11.

Financial Offer:

- d) Financial offer, per activity and relevant deliverables, specifying the responsible Regional Expert/Consultant, amount per Regional Expert/Consultant, as well as total amount, based on the table below. Please divide responsibilities based on Regional Expert/Consultant's expertise, meaning that not all Regional Experts/Consultants need to be involved in each activity/deliverable.

Activity	Deliverables	Responsible Regional Expert/Consultant	Amount (in EUR)
Development of a baseline study methodology	Baseline study methodology	Expert A Expert B etc.	X X
Conducting the baseline study	Baseline study activities documentation (i.e. survey, interviews, etc.)	Expert A Expert B etc.	X X
Preparing baseline study report	Baseline study report, including relevant annexes	Expert A Expert B etc.	X X
Defining set of monitoring indicators for each economy	Set of monitoring indicators for each economy	Expert A Expert B etc.	X X
Developing guidelines for data collection, analysis and reporting	Guidelines for data collection, analysis and reporting	Expert A Expert B etc.	X X
Preparation and delivery of a regional workshop	Workshop agenda Workshop design Workshop report with relevant annexes	Expert A Expert B etc.	X X
	Total per expert		X
	Total		X

The prices should be gross and stated in euros. Gross amount should include fees, travel, and accommodation costs, as per the proposed methodological approach, 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), which will be calculated and paid by NALAS. The Regional Expert/Consultant will receive the amount reduced for the paid personal income tax.

11. Requirements: Professional qualifications, expertise and experience of the team of Regional Experts/Consultants

To qualify as competent of performing the contract, the Team of Regional Experts/Consultants must meet the following requirements:

- Experience in conducting national and regional researches related to local government. At least 5 national and 2 regional researches conducted.
- Proven expertise in design and/or implementation of at least 2 systems, including observatories, indicators, data collection or reporting frameworks, with clear description of Regional Expert/Consultant's role.
- At least 10 years of experience in the field of local government.
- At least 10 years of experience in EU relations and EU integration.
- Practical experience in working with at least two Local Government Associations in

- the region (i.e. projects, advisory roles, or partnerships).
- Excellent written and spoken English.
- Proficiency in at least one of the languages spoken in the Western Balkans.

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% Regional Expert/Consultant's Capacity: qualifications, expertise and experience for fulfilling the tasks under this RfP;
- 30% Approach: Proposed approach, including baseline study and related activities' focus, approach, methodology and timeframe;
- 30% Financial Offer: Based on deliverables, as described in Chapter 10 d).

13. Terms of Payment

The payment will be made in two instalments, based on approval of the relevant deliverables, and submitted request for payment, as follows:

Instalment	After approval of the following deliverables
1	Baseline study methodology Baseline study activities documentation (i.e. survey, interviews, etc.) Baseline study report, including relevant annexes
2	Set of monitoring indicators for each economy Guidelines for data collection, analysis and reporting Workshop agenda Workshop design Workshop report with relevant annexes

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. For this specific RfP, individual contracts will be signed with each of the experts/consultants, based on the negotiated offer.

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.

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