

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Engagement of Experts for Conducting a Study on Local Public Administration Reform in Moldova: Concept, Impact Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement

Ref. No.: PSGA4 – P5

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Project Title: PLATFORMA

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

Beneficiary: Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM)

Donor: European Commission and Swiss Development Cooperation (through the NALAS Revolving Fund)

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) representing approximately 9,000 local authorities. NALAS promotes decentralization and local self-government reforms through policy dialogue, capacity development, knowledge exchange and advocacy initiatives.

In the framework of the PLATFORMA Eastern Partnership Programme, NALAS supports the institutional development and advocacy efforts of Local Government Associations in Eastern Partnership countries.

The Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM) has been actively engaged in promoting decentralization and strengthening local self-government in Moldova. While important reforms have been implemented over the years, challenges remain regarding the territorial organization of local government, fiscal sustainability, administrative capacity, service delivery effectiveness, demographic trends and intergovernmental relations.

As discussions on the future of local public administration reform continue in Moldova, there is a need for an evidence-based assessment of the current system, possible reform options and their potential implications.

To support informed policy dialogue, NALAS and CALM will cooperate in the development of a study on Local Public Administration Reform in Moldova. The study will analyze the current state of local governance from territorial, functional and fiscal perspectives, review relevant European experiences, assess potential reform scenarios and formulate recommendations for policymakers at national and local levels.

The study aims to contribute to evidence-based policy discussions and support future reforms that strengthen local democracy, improve service delivery and enhance the sustainability of local government.

2. Objective of the Assignment

The overall objective of this assignment is to develop a comprehensive study on Local Public Administration Reform in Moldova, providing an assessment of the current local governance system, comparative European experiences, impact analysis of reform scenarios and recommendations for future reforms.

The specific objectives of this assignment are to:

- Assess the current territorial, functional and fiscal organization of local government in Moldova.
- Identify key challenges affecting local governance, administrative capacity, service delivery and financial sustainability.
- Review selected European territorial and local government reform experiences relevant to Moldova.
- Analyze potential impacts of selected territorial reform scenarios.
- Develop evidence-based recommendations for national and local policymakers regarding future local public administration reforms.

3. Scope of Work

Two experts shall be engaged in the development of the study (Team Leader and Key Expert).

The **Key Expert** shall be responsible for:

1. Reviewing the legal, institutional and policy framework governing local self-government in Moldova.
2. Analyzing the current territorial organization of local government, including demographic trends, territorial fragmentation, local government finance, urban-rural disparities
3. Develop case study of eventual cases of inter-municipal cooperation arrangements.
4. Assessing the distribution of competencies and functions between central and local authorities and highlighting policy, legislative and institutional gaps.
5. Analysing the local government finance system, including own-source revenues, transfers, fiscal autonomy, expenditure responsibilities and financial sustainability.
6. Analysis of institutional and financing framework for territorial/local economic development, including brief cases studies with concrete examples.

Team Leader shall be responsible for:

1. Developing a conceptual framework for assessing local public administration reform options.
2. Analyzing selected reform scenarios and assessing their potential impacts on:
 - Governance and administrative capacity;
 - Service delivery;
 - Local democracy and citizen participation;
 - Local public finances;
 - Territorial cohesion and development.
3. Conducting a comparative review of selected European experiences in territorial reform, inter-municipal cooperation, decentralization and fiscal decentralization.
4. Conducting stakeholder consultations with representatives of central government institutions, local authorities, CALM, development partners and relevant experts.
5. Drafting actionable policy recommendations and possible reform pathways.
6. Preparing draft and final reports and presenting findings to stakeholders.
7. Review analysis conducted by the key expert and coordinate with the key expert for the finalization of the deliverables

4. Deliverables

The **Key Expert** is expected to deliver the following:

1. Draft analysis of legal, institutional and policy frameworks governing local governance in Moldova,
2. Draft- review of the distribution of competences and functions across levels of government and eventual policy, legislative and institutional gaps.
3. Draft analysis of the current territorial organization of local governance
4. Draft case studies of intermunicipal cooperation practices
5. Draft analysis of the local government finance system

The **Team Leader** is expected to deliver the following:

1. Developing a conceptual framework for local public administration reform options.

2. Analysis of territorial/local economic development framework
 3. Analyzing selected reform scenarios and their potential impact on governance, service delivery, representation, local finances and territorial development.
 4. Develop comparative overview of selected European experiences in territorial reforms, inter municipal cooperation and fiscal decentralization
 5. Conducting stakeholder consultations
 6. Review and cooperate with the Key Expert to finalize the assignment deliverables.
- drafting Inception Report: Methodology, workplan, proposed reform assessment framework and list of European case studies.
 - Drafting Final Report: Complete study including comparative analysis and policy recommendations.
 - Final Report: Revised report incorporating stakeholder comments.
 - Presentation: Summary presentation of key findings and recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders.

5. Indicative Outline of the Study Report

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

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
 - Background, Objectives, Methodology
2. Current State of Local Governance in Moldova
 - Territorial organization
 - Demographic and territorial trends
 - Functional responsibilities of local governments
 - Institutional capacity
 - Local public finance system
 - Local economic development
3. Key Challenges and Drivers for Reform
 - Territorial challenges
 - Administrative challenges
 - Fiscal challenges
 - Service delivery challenges

4. European Experiences in Local Government Reform
 - Overview of territorial reforms in Europe
 - Selected country case studies
 - Lessons learned relevant for Moldova
5. Reform Scenarios and Impact Analysis
 - Description of reform scenarios
 - Impact on governance and administration
 - Impact on local democracy
 - Impact on service delivery
 - Fiscal impact analysis
 - Risks and implementation considerations
6. Stakeholder Perspectives
 - Summary of consultations
 - Key concerns and priorities
7. Conclusions and Recommendations
 - Strategic recommendations
 - Policy options
 - Short-term priorities; Medium-term priorities; Long-term reform directions

Annexes

- References
- Stakeholder list
- Statistical tables
- Methodological notes

6. Location

The assignment shall be conducted in Moldova, including online and/or in-person consultations with stakeholders.

Field visits, if required, shall be agreed with NALAS and CALM. The Contracting Authority will not cover costs related to travel and accommodation separately. Such costs shall be included within the proposed financial offer.

7. Duration and Timeline

Tentative implementation period: July – October 2026.

- Phase 1 Literature review, methodology development, inception report.
- Phase 2 Data collection, stakeholder consultations and baseline assessment.

- Phase 3 Comparative analysis and impact assessment.
- Phase 4 Drafting, validation and finalization.

The duration and timeline may be revised by NALAS based on implementation needs.

8. Methodology

The experts will use a mixed-method approach combining:

- Desk Review: Review of legislation, policy documents, strategies, studies and statistical data.
- Comparative Analysis: Review of selected European territorial and local government reform experiences.
- Stakeholder Consultations: Interviews and consultations with national institutions, CALM, local governments, development partners and experts.
- Scenario Analysis: Assessment of alternative reform scenarios and their implications.
- Impact Assessment: Analysis of administrative, fiscal, governance and service delivery implications.

The study will address the following key research questions:

- What are the main territorial, functional and fiscal challenges facing local governments in Moldova?
- How have other European countries addressed similar challenges through territorial and local government reforms?
- What reform options could be considered in Moldova?
- What are the likely governance, fiscal and service delivery impacts of different reform scenarios?
- What policy measures should be prioritized to strengthen local self-government and improve local governance outcomes?

9. Required Qualifications

Qualifications for the Key Expert:

Qualifications and Skills

- Advanced university degree in Public Administration, Economics, Public Finance, Political Science, Law or related field.
- Excellent command of written and spoken English and Romanian.
- Strong analytical, facilitation and report-writing skills.

General Work Experience

- At least 10 years of relevant professional experience

Specific Work Experience

- At least 7 years of experience in local governance, decentralization, fiscal decentralization, territorial reforms or local public administration reform in Moldova and/or in South-East Europe.
- Experience in conducting policy studies and analytical research.
- Experience working with local government associations and understanding of LGA lobbying and advocacy practices.
- Knowledge of Eastern Partnership and South-East European economies is an asset.

Qualifications for the Team Leader:

Qualifications and Skills

- Advanced university degree in Public Administration, Economics, Public Finance, Political Science, Law or related field.
- Excellent command of written and spoken English. Knowledge of Romanian is an asset.
- Strong analytical, facilitation and report-writing skills.

General Work Experience

- At least 10 years of relevant professional experience

Specific Work Experience

- At least 7 years of experience in local governance, decentralization, fiscal decentralization, territorial reforms or local public administration reforms in Moldova.
- Experience in conducting policy studies and analytical research
- Experience working with local government associations and understanding of LGA lobbying and advocacy
- Experience with international organizations or development partners is an asset
- Knowledge of Eastern Partnership and South-East European economies is an asset.

10. Reporting and Supervision

The experts will report to the designated NALAS Programme Manager.

The experts will work in close coordination with representatives of CALM and the PLATFORMA Secretariat throughout the implementation of the assignment.

11. Budget and Payment Schedule

The maximum available budget for this global price contract is EUR 5,000 (VAT excluded).

The maximum available budget for the Team Leader is EUR 2,500 (VAT excluded). The maximum available budget for the Key Expert is EUR 2,500 (VAT excluded).

Payment shall be made as follows:

- 30% upon approval of the Inception Report.
- 40% upon approval of the Draft Final Report.
- 30% upon approval of the Final Report and Presentation.

12. Modification of Terms

NALAS reserves the right to adjust the scope, timeline and deliverables of the assignment, based on evolving implementation needs and circumstances.