Request for Proposals and Terms of Reference

Regional IT Expert/s for design, development, operation and maintenance of LORAI dashboard

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 Regional IT Expert or Teams of IT experts (in the text below: IT Expert/s) for design, development, operation and maintenance of the regional open-access online dashboard on the role of local authorities in implementation of the Reform Agendas in the Western Balkans (LORAI Dashboard).

2. Invitation

Individual IT experts or teams of IT experts/consultants (natural persons) with proven experience and expertise in design, development, operation and maintenance of on-line dashboards, observatories, monitoring and data visualisation online platforms, related to local governments and EU relations 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) "Expert/s" means an individual expert or team of 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 **9 November 2026 (Monday), 16:00** (CET) at **info@nalas.eu**, with Subject: Offer for IT services for LORAI dashboard.

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 (the Congress) 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 (RA) 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 idea of LORAI Dashboard

The LORAI Dashboard is the regional monitoring and advocacy instrument that makes the local-government contribution to Reform Agenda implementation visible, comparable and usable across the six Western Balkan beneficiaries.

The Dashboard is an operational part of the LORAI programme's sustainable, transparent, gender-sensitive and data-driven monitoring framework. It should support existing Reform Agendas' indicators relevant to local authorities; accommodate sex-disaggregated data where relevant and available.

Objectives of the LORAI Dashboard

- Facilitate access to timely, accurate, reliable and updated data and information on the local government perspective of the Reform Agendas for the Western Balkans.
- Support national and regional intergovernmental dialogue and consultation on the Reform Agendas.
- Provide a credible evidence base for advocacy towards the European Commission and the next Multiannual Financial Framework negotiation.
- Highlight evidence-based indications of local level implementation bottlenecks, unfunded responsibilities, capacity pressures on small and rural municipalities, and quality of consultation.
- Support peer learning and collaboration across the region.

Users of LORAI Dashboard

- Project partners: NALAS, seven participating LGAs, CEMR and the Congress.
- Central-authority interlocutors: Reform Coordinators, line ministries, RA monitoring committees, Ministries of Finance and WBIF focal points.
- EU and regional stakeholders, such as EU Delegations, DG ENEST, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), donor community.
- Public audiences: citizens, CSOs, media and think-tanks.

Potential structure of LORAI Dashboard

The LORAI Dashboard shall have an interactive front page with the following elements:

- Data and visualisations
- Policy positions and advocacy messages
- Publications
- Key facts
- Useful links
- News: an embedded function for LORAI partners' news and publications related to the Reform Agenda
- About the EU-CoE programme LORAI

The data and visualization page, is key to the functions of preparing visualizations and shall be divided in two main sections: regional and beneficiary-specific.

Regional section

- Data and visualisations: Findings of the baseline study
- 5 core regional indicators
- Data and visualisations: 3 regional reports regional findings (December 2026, June 2027, November 2027)

The regional indicators are in the final development phase, below is an indication how they might look like:

- Number and percentage of official Reform Agenda steps with a direct or indirect impact on local governments (with further analysis of the specific areas)

- Percentage of locally relevant Reform Agenda steps implemented with participation of local governments (with further analysis of the specific areas)
- Percentage of Reform Agenda steps that contain local government obligations but no identified financing source (with further analysis of the specific areas)

Economy modules

One module per economy hosting economy-level data:

- Data and visualisations: Findings of the baseline study/economy profiles
- Economy-specific indicators – currently up to 5 per economy
- Data and visualisations: Key economy findings from 3 reports (December 2026, June 2027, November 2027)

The economy-specific indicators are in the final development phase, below is an indication how they might look like:

- Percentage of eligible local government units awarded financing under Reform Agenda-.
- Percentage of eligible local self-government units that actively use national digital services or systems linked to the Reform Agenda.
- Percentage of capital investment funds utilized by local governments.

The data that will be used for the development of the visualisations shall be provided in Excel and Word format, clearly linked to an already existing Reform Agenda's indicator.

Both the regional and the economy modules should provide for basic download and reuse features: indicator sheets in open formats (CSV, XLSX) and permanent URLs for every visual.

Roles, permissions and governance

- **Public visitor:** Read-only access to the full public core, downloads and embed functions. No login required.
- **Administrator:** Operational custodian who handles data upload and ingestion runs, scheduled refreshes, technical maintenance, user account management, backups and incident response, executes the publication step on instruction of the editor and keeps the audit log of data updates and changes. Does not decide on indicator content or interpret results. Produces statistics and utilisation reports.
- **Editor:** NALAS staff, with editorial and analytical authority curating the Dashboard content; approves indicator definitions, sources and metadata; configures the data ingestion logic in coordination with the Administrator; and validates submissions before they enter the published dataset.
- **Contributor:** LGAs' staff, contribute with national data, flag data-quality issues, ideas on data presentation and needs for structural change to the Dashboard.

LORAI Dashboard connection with other related platforms

Three related platforms should be taken into consideration in the process of development of the LORAI Dashboard, ensuring consistency, harmonisation and cross referencing:

- Reform and Growth Facility Scoreboard
- Western Balkans Reform and Growth Monitor
- NALAS Decentralisation Observatory

Technical requirements for the dashboard website:

- Ownership and source code: NALAS will have full access and ownership rights over the dashboard website and its source code. The website will be developed with open-source components. The IT Expert/s contractor shall provide the source code and repository access, technical information, configuration details, administrative credentials and instructions necessary for NALAS to operate, maintain and further develop the dashboard independently.
- Responsive Design: The website will feature a responsive web design taking into account several different devices (desktop, mobile).
- Accessibility: The website will conform to WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards according to EU Directive 2016/210210.
- Multilingual: as already mentioned, the base language for content will be English, but there should be the possibility to add content in other languages of the region. The use of machine translation shall be embedded.
- Data upload: The data used for the interactive visualizations can be uploaded to the website by editors (NALAS staff).
- Open Data: Uploaded data for the interactive visualizations can be made available for download as open data. This basically means the ability to add the following information per uploaded dataset: a. Indicating an open license (e. g. CC-BY11). b. In technical formats that allow re-use (e. g. CSV, JSON, XML or RDF12) c. Described by Metadata according to DCAT.AP13
- Hosting: Hosting of the website will be organised by the contractor. Yearly costs for hosting will be indicated. Hosting will include a domain name and a https-connection.
- Feedback, pilot testing and revisions: The IT Expert/s shall provide ongoing support, conduct pilot testing, and be available for rounds of feedback and revisions with NALAS until the dashboard is finalised and ready for launch.
- Content management: basic content management system functionality will be provided, such as user management, static pages and blog posts (or news pages), upload of images and other documents (PDF).
- The dashboard shall comply with relevant security protocols to prevent unauthorised access, protect personal and confidential data, and ensure secure backups.

9. 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 provide IT support in the design, development, operation and maintenance of the LORAI dashboard**, as specified below:

* *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.*

- Preparation of a concept for the LORAI Dashboard-structure and design.
- Developing the design, technical development, hosting and deployment of the LORAI Dashboard website.
- Populating the LORAI Dashboard with the findings of the conducted Baseline Study.
- Training for NALAS staff in using and managing the dashboard.
- Populating the LORAI Dashboard with the findings of three reports.
- Regular management, maintenance, updates and back-up of the dashboard, until 15 December 2027.

All activities listed above will be implemented remotely/online.

10. Activities, deliverables and deadlines under the contract

Activity	Deliverables	Deadlines
Preparation of a concept for the LORAI Dashboard-structure and design.	Concept for the LORAI Dashboard-structure and design.	16 November 2026
Developing the design, technical development, hosting and deployment of the LORAI Dashboard website.	LORAI dashboard deployment report 1.	23 November 2026
Populating the LORAI Dashboard with the findings of the conducted Baseline Study.	LORAI dashboard deployment report 2.	30 November 2026
Training for NALAS staff in using and managing the dashboard.	Training manual. Online training recording.	31 December 2026
Populating the LORAI Dashboard with the findings of three reports.	LORAI dashboard deployment report 3. LORAI dashboard deployment report 4. LORAI dashboard deployment report 5.	31 December 2026 June 2027 November 2027
Regular management, maintenance, updates and back-up of the dashboard, until 15 December 2027.	Maintenance reports and back-up.	November 2026 November 2027

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

11. Proposal submission

The complete proposal submitted by the IT Expert/s shall include the following elements:

Technical Offer:

a) **Cover Letter** of **up to 1 page**, explaining IT Expert/s' **suitability for the assignment**, as specified in this RfP.
b) **Proposed approach** in **up to 3 pages**, focused on the **added value propositions** of the bidder.
c) **Brief CV** of **up to 3 pages** (in case of teams, CV of each team member). The CV shall focus only on **how the expert meets the criteria** stated under Chapter 12.
d) In case of team of Regional Experts, **Declaration of commitment**, signed by all team members.

To be able to objectively evaluate bids, based on merit, NALAS strongly discourages use of AI-generated content.

Financial Offer:

e) **Financial offer, per activity and relevant deliverables** (not working days) specifying the responsible IT Expert/s, amount per IT Expert/s, as well as total amount, based on the table below. **In case of teams**, please divide responsibilities based on IT Expert's expertise, meaning that not all IT Experts need to be involved in each activity/deliverable.

Activity	Deliverables	Responsible Regional Expert	Amount (in EUR)
Preparation of a concept for the LORAI Dashboard-structure and design.	Concept for the LORAI Dashboard-structure and design.	*Expert NAME*	*AMOUNT*
Developing the design, technical development, hosting and deployment of the LORAI Dashboard website.	LORAI dashboard deployment report 1.	*Expert NAME*	*AMOUNT*
Populating the LORAI Dashboard with the findings of the conducted Baseline Study.	LORAI dashboard deployment report 2.	*Expert NAME*	*AMOUNT*
Training for NALAS staff in using and managing the dashboard.	Training manual. Online training recording.	*Expert NAME*	*AMOUNT*
Populating the LORAI Dashboard with the findings of three reports.	LORAI dashboard deployment report 3. LORAI dashboard deployment report 4. LORAI dashboard deployment report 5.	*Expert NAME*	*AMOUNT*
Regular management, maintenance, updates and back-up of the dashboard, until 15 December 2027.	Maintenance reports and back-up.	*Expert NAME*	*AMOUNT*
	Total per expert		*AMOUNT*
	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), which will be calculated and paid by NALAS. The Regional Expert/s will receive the amount reduced for the paid personal income tax. They shall receive the accountancy documents relevant to the payments made, for their bookkeeping.

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

To qualify as competent of performing the contract, the Regional IT Expert/s must meet the following requirements:

- Experience in design, development, operation and maintenance of at least two on-line dashboards, observatories, monitoring and data visualisation online platforms.
- At least two years of experience working with local governments and EU relations.
- IT education.

- Knowledge and experience in working with LGAs is an asset.
- Excellent written and spoken English.

13. Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

The proposals will be evaluated and rated based on the criteria set out in this RfP, in two steps:

Step 1: Eligibility screening, to ensure that the proposal meets ALL of the following:

- The proposal must be submitted by natural person/s.
- The proposal must be submitted in English.
- The proposal must be submitted by the stated deadline.
- The proposal must be complete, containing all the elements in terms of content, format and size, as specified in Chapter 11 of this RfP.

Step 2: Technical and financial evaluation of proposals

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

- Technical criteria:
  -40% Regional IT Expert's/Regional IT Expert Team's Capacity: qualifications, expertise and experience for fulfilling the tasks under this RfP. *Please note that each team member should meet the requirements under Chapter 12*;
  -30% Approach: Proposed approach, including added value propositions.
  Minimum technical threshold for passing into the next stage (financial evaluation) is 60% of the total number of average points per Regional Expert/s (42 points at least).
- Financial Criteria:
  -30% Financial Offer: Based on activity and deliverables, as described in Chapter 11 e).

14. Terms of Payment

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

Instalment	After approval of the following deliverables
1	Concept for the LORAI Dashboard-structure and design. LORAI dashboard deployment report 1. LORAI dashboard deployment report 2. Training manual. Online training recording. LORAI dashboard deployment report 3.
2	LORAI dashboard deployment report 4.
3	LORAI dashboard deployment report 5. Maintenance reports and back-up.

The third, final payment will be made after the approval of the relevant deliverables, as well as deposited source code and repository access, technical information, configuration details, administrative credentials and instructions necessary for NALAS to operate, maintain and further develop the dashboard independently .

15. Modification of Terms

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

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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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