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Expert-Grup Centru Analitic Independent

Institutul pentru Politici și Reforme Europene

INSTITUTUM VIRTUTES CIVILIS

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

TERMS OF REFERENCE

For selecting 15 local CSO for implementing "Resilient CSOs + Responsible Budgeting = Accelerated AA implementation" Project

1. Brief project description

Donor: European Commission and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (German political foundation)
Implementation period: January 2023 – June 2025
Project total budget: EUR 1.1 million

Independent Analytical Center Expert-Grup, as lead partner, in consortium with the Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), Institutum Virtutes Civilis (IVC) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Foundation started implementation in January 2023 of the EU-grant project "Resilient CSOs + Responsible Budgeting = Accelerated AA implementation".

The project is built on the experience, materials and lessons learned from the previous EU-funded project Bugetul Meu" ("Inform, Empower, Act") implemented by Expert-Grup and IPRE during 2019-2022, which aimed at enhancing the budgetary transparency and participation of local CSOs in budgetary processes.

The general objective of the project is to build and consolidate capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to support the implementation of the conditionalities attached to Moldova's accession process to the EU and the Association Agreement (AA), at national and local level.

Specific objectives:

1. Improve capacity, ensure resilience and enhance participation of CSOs in the budgetary monitoring and advocacy at central and local level, with a priority focus on budgets analysis in the context of AA implementation and Moldova's accession process to the EU.

2. Enhance capacity and involvement of the three CSOs' platforms (i) Moldovan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (ii) the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform' and (iii) the Domestic Advisory Group on Trade and Sustainable Development, to provide cohesive support for the implementation of the AA and the conditionalities attached to Moldova's accession process in the EU.

The **main activities** of the project are:

- Delivering a complex capacity building programme for the selected CSOs on budget monitoring, aiming at enhancing their participation in budget expenditure monitoring and advocacy at central and local levels;
- Drafting and publishing 30 expenditure monitoring reports by the selected CSOs, covering topics on certain projects and policies at local and central level, related to the Europeanization agenda;
- Conducting visibility and advocacy events on budget monitoring at the local and central level;

- Ensuring a well-functioning joint secretariat for the coordination of the three above mentioned CSOs platforms, aiming at ensuring that their members act in cohesion with regard to the implementation of the AA and Europeanization agenda;
- Training members of the 3 CSOs platforms in key competences linked to the AA;
- Launching an awareness raising and information campaign among CSOs on the importance of civic engagement in advancing the AA and Europeanization agenda;
- Launching an advocacy campaign on national and on European level, aiming at informing the domestic and international audience, about the state of play with the Europeanization reforms agenda.

Target groups and final beneficiaries of the project:

For the implementation of the **specific object 1** of the project, the target group are 15 community based CSOs from 5 development regions of the country: North, Centre, South, TAU Gagauz-yeri and Transnistria, that will benefit from capacity building and will be provided grants to conduct budget monitoring and advocacy activities. It is planned that 45 members of the selected CSOs (3 people per CSO) will be trained to receive expertise and be capable to engage constructively in the budgetary processes: analysing the local and state budgets, monitoring the budgetary planning and execution, with a special emphasis on monitoring budgets in the context of AA implementation, Europeanization agenda and use of the EU assistance.

For the implementation of the **specific object 2** of the project, target group are the three platforms of CSOs: Moldovan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform and the Domestic Advisory Group on Trade and Sustainable Development, whose capacity will be improved and be supported financially. It is planned that about 75 CSOs that are the most active members of the mentioned platforms, will be selected to receive training on organizational management and development, fundraising, financial reporting, policy advocacy and other key aspects for a successful development of CSOs.

Ultimately, relying on the outcomes of the project, the beneficiary of this project will be the entire population of the country, including the Transnistrian region, who will benefit from accelerated implementation of the AA and the advancement of the Europeanization process.

2. Objective of the assignment

As relying on the first specific objective of the project described above, the core activities will focus on building and consolidating capacities of the community-based CSOs on budgetary monitoring. This will empower and encourage CSOs participation in the reform process in the various sectors foreseen in the EU Moldova AA, while strengthening their capacities to advocate for a proper alignment of the budget and policies to the priorities of the Europeanization agenda.

In this regard, there will be selected, via a competitive process, 15 CSOs from the 5 development regions: North, Centre, South, TAU Gagauzia and Transnistria (3 CSOs per region).

Each selected CSO will be the beneficiary of a sub-granting scheme of up to 20 000 EUR, allocated for the entire project duration to fund all the activities that will contribute to the implementation of monitoring activities and reports. Primarily, it will include: salary costs, relevant administrative costs and bank charges.

The beneficiaries of a sub-granting scheme will follow five key objectives:

- monitoring the local budgets and budgetary allocations from the central level and development partners, with a special emphasis on local and regional infrastructure projects, social services, public services and other relevant projects related to the AA and Europeanization agenda;
- monitoring, together with the central project team, the budgetary expenditures at the central level for projects and policies related to the Europeanization agenda, with a special emphasis on the following topics: justice sector and anti-corruption reform; labour and employment policies; social services; energy efficiency and renewable energy; pubic services; and human-rights, including gender equality
- participation, together with the central project team, in the dissemination and visibility activities at the local level;
- becoming local resource-centres, capable of mobilizing other CSOs and civic activists at the local level for participatory budgeting and budgetary monitoring activities;
- participation in the activities of the CSOs platforms (mentioned above) by providing local/regional insights into position notes, events and advocacy activities of platforms.

3. Key activities

Preparatory phase

Each selected CSOs will benefit of a preparatory phase for the project. Thus, 45 participants representing the selected CSOs (3 people from each CSO) will attend a training course delivered by the central project team. The training aims at increasing CSOs capacity on budget monitoring and advocacy related to the implementation of Europeanization Agenda. Particularly, the training programme will include 5 separate modules (1 day per module), namely:

1. main concepts about civic participation in the budgetary process at the central and local level; understanding the budgetary figures and opportunities for advocacy at the central and local level; conducting expenditure tracking activities; and civic-led communication and advocacy, based on findings of budgetary monitoring and expenditure tracking activities;
2. assessing the correlation between the budgetary process and the Europeanization agenda, understanding the gaps and opportunities, identification of policy advocacy priorities;
3. conducting expenditure tracking activities in social and human rights areas (public services, social services, employment policies, human rights and gender policies etc.);
4. conducting expenditure tracking activities in the justice sector;
5. conducting expenditure tracking activities in economic areas (public investments, economic subsidies, job creation and export promotion activities etc.).

Activities that will be implemented by selected CSOs

- Each CSO will be responsible for drafting 2 budget expenditure monitoring analysis: one at the local level and one at the central level. The topics will focus on certain projects and policies related to the Europeanization agenda, and will be selected by the CSOs, taking into account their best knowledge of the local context and priorities, in close coordination with the central project team experts. The methodology and implementation approach will be in line with the capacity building trainings. Throughout the process of report development, the local CSOs will engage actively with the central project team, who will provide practical guidance and mentorship in order to ensure the necessary quality, relevance and impact of these reports.
- Each CSOs will conduct visibility and advocacy activities to promote the results of the independent budget expenditure tracking reports they developed. The visibility and advocacy activities will include 2 public round tables (one at the central and one at the local level).
- CSOs will engage in networking activities, ensuring an exchange of experience and lessons learned among CSOs and, especially, between local (small) CSOs and central (well-established) CSOs.

4. Timeline of key activities

The activities will be implemented according to the following tentative milestones calendar:

- Participating in a 5-day general training organized by the central project team: by the end of August 2023;
- Drafting the independent budget expenditure tracking reports: September 2023 – December 2024;
- Conducting the visibility and awareness activities: September 2023 – December 2024;
- Engaging in networking activities, ensuring the exchange of experience and lessons learned among CSOs – through the end of project.

5. General and specific requirements from CSOs

General requirements:

- Non-governmental organization that is legally registered in the Republic of Moldova;
- Preference will be given to local CSOs that are actively working at the local/regional level;
- Independence from any political party or public authority;
- Ability to act according to the statute/regulation in the field of participatory budgeting;

Specific requirements:

- At least 3 years of experience in implementing projects/activities aimed at monitoring central/local budgets, mobilizing local communities and engaging with local public authorities;
- Previous experience in implementing grants, sub-grants financed by the EU or other international development partners is considered and asset.

The key evaluation criteria will include, but will not be limited to: the experience in dealing with similar projects, capacity to mobilize local communities, including representatives from vulnerable groups, capacity

to productively engage with local public authorities, reputation at the local level, political independence and integrity of the candidates and willingness to participate in the capacity building programme organised by central project team.

6. How to apply

Interested CSOs are invited to submit their applications, comprising the following documents:

- a short motivation letter, indicating the reason for participation, and also the objectives and results that will be achieved following the use of the grant. Also, in the letter will be indicated the region where the organization intends to operate (North, Central, South, Transnistria, Gagauzia);
- a short description of the organization (1-2 pages);
- a proposed budget for project activities;
- the list of relevant project references (no limit);
- certificate of registration (excerpt from the State Register of Legal Entities issued no later than 12 months prior to the application submission date will be requested in case of contract signature);
- the activity report of the organization for the most recent year;
- the charter of the organization;
- financial reports for the last 3 years (balance sheets, profit and loss statement, etc.);
- the most recent audit report of the financial statements of the organization (if available).

The application should be presented in the Romanian language.

The new deadline for submitting the documents is March 16, 2023, 14.00 to the email address procurari@expert-grup.org.

Any questions can be addressed at ecaterina@expert-grup.org (contact person: Ecaterina Rusu, project manager).