

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Selection of an evaluator to conduct the end-of-project evaluation: “Resilient CSOs + Responsible Budgeting = Accelerated AA implementation”

1. Brief project description

Donor: European Commission and Friedrich Ebert Foundation

Implementation period: January 2023 – December 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 Foundation started implementation in January 2023 of the EU-grant project “Resilient CSOs + Responsible Budgeting = Accelerated AA implementation”, generically called “Civil Society for European Integration”.

The general objective of the project is to build and consolidate the 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 Agenda, at the national and local levels.

Specific objectives:

1. Improve capacity, ensure resilience, and enhance participation of CSOs in the budget monitoring and advocacy at the central and local levels, with a priority focus on budget analysis in the context of AA implementation and Moldova’s accession process to the EU.
2. Enhance the capacity and involvement of the three CSOs' platforms (i) the 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 to the EU.

The main activities of the project are:

- Developing and delivering a capacity-building training program for the 15-grant beneficiary CSOs on budget expenditure 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 15 CSOs¹, covering topics on certain projects and policies at the local and central levels related to the Europeanization agenda;
- Conducting visibility and advocacy events on budget monitoring at the local and central levels;

¹ <https://www.euromonitor.md/projectdescription/>

- Establishing 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;
- Delivering a capacity-building training for members of the 3 CSOs platforms (mentioned above) in key competencies linked to the AA and Europeanization agenda;
- Conducting an awareness-raising and information campaign among CSOs on the importance of civic engagement in advancing the AA and Europeanization agenda;
- Conducting an advocacy campaign on national and European levels, 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 objective 1** of the project, the target group was 15 community-based CSOs from 5 development regions of the country: North, Centre, South, TAU Gagauzia, and Transnistria, which benefited from capacity building and provided grants to conduct budget monitoring and advocacy activities.

For the implementation of **specific objective 2** of the project, the target group was represented by three CSO platforms: the 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. These platforms members received training in organizational management and development, fundraising, financial reporting, policy advocacy, and other essential areas for effective CSO development.

2. Scope of the assignment

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (TOR) is to select an evaluator to conduct an assessment of the project “Resilient CSOs + Responsible Budgeting = Accelerated AA Implementation.” The evaluation will focus on the project's efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Evaluator will assess the project's performance against planned results and provide actionable recommendations to strengthen future initiatives and enhance the role of CSOs in Moldova's Europeanization process.

The evaluation will review the project's design and the assumptions made during its development. It will examine project management practices, implementation strategies, and activities. Additionally, it will assess the establishment of partnerships, capacity-building efforts, communication efforts, and the integration of cross-cutting issues, including human rights/gender dimension.

3. Evaluation dimensions and Questions

The evaluator will use the following criteria:

Effectiveness:

- Was the project effective in delivering planned results?
- To what extent did the Project's M&E mechanism contribute in meeting project results?

- How effective were the strategies and tools used in the implementation of the project?

Efficiency:

- Were resources used optimally to achieve results?
- Was the process of achieving results efficient?
- What factors contributed to implementation efficiency?
- How did the project financial management processes and procedures affect project implementation?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project implementation process?

Impact:

- To what extent did the project achieve its overall objectives?
- What and how much progress has been made towards achieving the impacts, outcomes and outputs?
- What changes have occurred as a result of the project?

Sustainability:

- To what extent are the benefits of the project likely to be sustained after the completion of this project?
- What are the key factors that will require attention in order to improve prospects of sustainability of project outcomes?
- What are the recommendations for similar support in future?

4. Methodology for evaluation

The Evaluator will develop a comprehensive framework and methodology tailored to address the key evaluation questions. The proposed methodology must be included in the evaluator's proposal and will serve as a selection criterion for identifying the most suitable evaluator for the assignment. The proposal should clearly justify the chosen methodological approach as the most appropriate for answering the evaluation questions.

The Evaluator shall apply both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze data effectively. This approach will ensure a thorough response to the evaluation questions.

To gather relevant insights, the Evaluator will conduct interviews with implementing partners, grant beneficiary CSOs, representatives of civil society platforms, and other stakeholders. Data will be collected through focus groups, individual interviews, and other appropriate methods to comprehensively address the evaluation questions

5. Deliverables and Timeline

The evaluation is expected to take place from **September 2025 to November 2025**.

The evaluator will deliver the following:

- **Inception Report:** Detailing evaluation design, methodology, and work plan. It will be consulted and validated by project team – by September 30, 2025.

- **Report about the results of interviews/surveys:** outlining the key findings of evaluator's discussions with relevant stakeholders about project activities and results - by October 31, 2025.
- **Draft Evaluation Report:** that contains answers to the mentioned 4 key evaluation dimensions and provides recommendations – November 15, 2025.
- **Final Evaluation Report:** Incorporating feedback, including an executive summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations - November 30, 2025.

6. Required Qualifications

The evaluator should possess:

- Professional experience in evaluating similar projects, financed by international institutions (at least 5 years of experience);
- In-depth understanding of civil society capacity building, EU integration, and public budgeting,
- Knowledge on the context in which the public authorities are operating in the Republic of Moldova;
- Strong analytical, communication, and reporting skills;
- Knowledge and expertise in collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, including conducting interviews, elaborating monitoring indicators and using data for formulating causal links;

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The Evaluator will interact with the project team from Expert-Grup and project coordinators from IVC, FES and IPRE.

Key responsibilities of the Evaluator:

- to elaborate a detailed methodology for evaluation;
- to arrange the logistics of travel, interviews and focus groups;
- to collect and analyze the data;
- to participate in interviews and focus groups;
- to elaborate the draft and final report;
- to present the findings of evaluation to project team.

Key responsibilities of the project team:

- to facilitate the access of the Evaluator to relevant data and documents;
- to manage the contract/evaluation process and serve as a liaison with the Consultant;
- to approve final products;

8. Application Procedure

Interested evaluators are invited to submit:

- 1) A technical proposal, including:

- CV of the evaluator
- Description of the relevant experience, including previous experience in evaluating similar projects;
- The detailed timeline of activities, indicating the deadlines for completing the tasks and submitting the expected deliverable, according to this ToR;
- References and recommendations.

2) A financial proposal with a breakdown of costs. The financial offer will be presented in EUR and will include all taxes.

The amount effort is estimated at 35 days.

9. Submission Deadline

The application set will be presented in Romanian or English and will contain the technical and financial proposals at the email address: **procurari@expert-grup.org** by April 30, 19.00, p.m, 2025. Please take notice that only complete applications will be considered.

10. Evaluation process of candidates

The evaluation process will follow a two-stage approach, with a total of 100 points available.

Stage 1: In the first stage, all submitted technical proposals will be evaluated against the specified criteria at point 6, with a total of maximum 100 points distributed across the evaluation criteria. To qualify for further consideration, a proposal must achieve a minimum score of 75 points.

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score	Scoring Guidelines
Relevant Professional Experience Minimum of 5 years' experience in evaluating projects funded by international institutions	35 points	5 years: 15 points 6 – 8 years: 25 points 9+ years: 35 points
Methodological Capacity Proven ability to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data; includes interviews, indicators, and causal analysis.	20 points	Limited or generic description of methodological expertise: 0 – 9 points Adequate methodological expertise with partial coverage of requirements: 10 – 15 points Strong demonstration with: relevant samples/references: 16 –20 points
Thematic Expertise Demonstrated understanding of civil society capacity building, EU integration, and public budgeting	15 points	Limited or general knowledge; lacks relevant examples or practical experience: 0 – 5 points Moderate understanding of 1–2 areas; some relevant experience provided: 6 – 10 points In-depth expertise in all three areas, experience clearly linked to evaluation work: 11 – 15 points
Contextual Knowledge	15 points	General understanding; no direct experience: 0 – 5 points

Understanding of the operational environment of public authorities in the Republic of Moldova		Good understanding supported by some relevant experience working with or around Moldovan public authorities: 6 – 10 points Deep insight into Moldovan public sector operations and challenges, proven track record of working directly with public authorities or on related reforms: 11 – 15 points
Analytical, Communication, and Reporting Skills Clarity, coherence, and quality of previous deliverables.	15 points	Basic evidence of relevant skills: 0 – 10 points High-quality deliverables and impactful reporting shown: 11 – 15 points

Stage 2: Applicants whose technical proposals meet or exceed the minimum qualifying score will proceed to the second stage, where financial proposals will be assessed. The final selection will be based on the combined score of both the technical and financial evaluations. The final score will be calculated as a weighted sum, where the technical proposal will contribute 70% (up to 70 points), and the financial proposal will contribute 30% (up to 30 points) of the total score.