

TERMS OF REFERENCE
MID-TERM EVALUATION
for the Project
“Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub”
financed
by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

1. BACKGROUND

➤ **Contracting Authority**

The Contracting Authority is the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) Executive Office.

➤ **Beneficiary**

The beneficiary of this project is the Balkan Civil Society Development Network and in particular, its Executive Office in Skopje, being the host of the Regional Civil Society Development Hub.

➤ **Legal Basis**

The legal basis for this assignment derives from the Grant Agreement No. 12715 01 signed between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), where SIDA has agreed to provide financial support to the project regarding “Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub”.

➤ **Relevant Background:**

Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is a network of 14 civil society organizations from 10 countries and territories in southeast Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Montenegro, Slovenia, Serbia, and Turkey). Our mission is to empower the civil society and influence European and national policies towards more enabling environment for civil society development in order to ensure sustainable and functioning democracies in the Balkans.

Our goals and objectives are the following:

1. To increase the role of civil society by strengthening its voice in policy- and decision-making at national, regional and EU level;
2. To promote the civil dialogue between the civil society actors, state institutions and the European Union in order to influence the public policies;
3. To develop advocacy knowledge and skills among civil society actors as a base for greater impact; and
4. To strengthen communication, coordination and cooperation between the civil society actors in the Balkan region.

The Balkan Network consists of partner organizations, which are equal in their rights and duties as members of the network. The principles of cooperation, partnership, tolerance, dialogue and respect for others are the main working principles of the network. The Network comprises the Council, the Board, the Executive Office, and the Executive Director.

BCSDN target group are CSOs working on civil society development (CSDev) in the Balkan region. The direct beneficiaries are local civil society development and resource organizations. With its activities, the network targets stakeholders such as national institutions and international governmental organizations (IGOs). Among national institutions, the focus is on national public bodies and/or offices for cooperation with CSOs in member countries. Among IGOs, in focus are the EU institutions, Council of Europe (CoE), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Western Balkan Fund and related inter-governmental initiatives in the Balkan region. BCSDN promotes the principle of inclusiveness of marginalized and vulnerable groups in the society (incl. Roma community, inhabitants of rural areas). BCSDN works in countries of the Balkan region, Europe and internationally, according to its mission, vision, and goals.

Following BCSDN and its members' common vision to strengthen a vibrant, pluralistic and rights-based civil society in the Balkans, BCSDN prepared a project proposal regarding establishment of a regional civil society development hub that will enable the use of new and established funding mechanisms, working methods and means of cooperation towards advancing its efforts. The proposal was presented to the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in 2019. After its approval, SIDA has granted significant financial support to BCSDN (MEUR 1,495) for implementation of the project "Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub" which was initiated in September 2019.

The Project aims to establish a Regional Civil Society Development Hub that will serve as a regional center with a global impact that creates and shares knowledge and innovation on the role of CSOs in promoting democracy and supporting the development of civil society in the Western Balkans in the long term. The Hub will support effective, transparent and accountable CSOs that will contribute to protecting civic space by enabling the use of new and established funding mechanism, working methods, and means of cooperation.

In this respect, in 2020/ 2021, the Hub will provide regional multi-country grants that will be awarded through a competitive procedure to regional networks and initiatives submitting the most promising proposals, against agreed quality criteria, on how to advance the civic space in their region.

Also, the Hub will provide funds for the organizations in case of an emergency or innovation involved. The funds can be awarded for expert's missions in other Western Balkan organizations that have requested peer advice and exchange of experience on a specific civic space topic and for organizing regional conferences, workshops, single or multi-country events on mainstreaming human rights, gender equality, environment and a healthy planet.

The Hub has several governing bodies, which are established to support its work and to ensure that all processes implemented are respecting the main principles of segregation of duties, transparency and impartiality in the decision making.

The governing bodies of the Hub are the following:

- BCSDN Board as a governing body
- Steering Group of the Hub
- Task Force Group
- BCSDN Executive Office (EO).

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of this assignment is the following:

- To carry out a mid-term evaluation of the Project's initial setup, the establishment of the Regional Hub including all respective entities and the procedures prepared regarding its functioning, and to provide consultant's opinion and recommendations.

With the mid-term evaluation the consultant should review the preparedness of the Regional Hub to properly conduct all processes foreseen with the Project.

The consultant shall use the SIDA OECD/ DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation.

2.1 Requested services regarding the assignment

The consultant should carry out a compliance assessment review, i.e. should assess the initial setup of the Regional Hub and the distribution of the roles and responsibilities among the entities that are involved in the functioning of the Hub, i.e. the governing bodies. This assessment should provide reasonable assurance to the Beneficiary that the setup of the Project and the established cooperation among the entities concerned is in line with the donor requirements and complies with the general principles of proper segregation of duties, transparency of the activities carried out and impartiality in the decision making process.

At the end of the assignment it is expected that opinion on the setup and functioning of the Hub and suggestions on how these processes and arrangements can be improved is provided to the Beneficiary. Also in case of Identification of possible risks that could burden the future functioning of the Hub and/ or Project's implementation, these should be also noted in the consultant's report.

The success of the Hub depends on effective and accountable governance and implementation. Therefore, the consultant should provide its independent opinion on the manner in which the responsibilities are distributed among these entities (Steering Group, Task Force Group and Executive Office) and whether this kind of a setup may cause some problems in the implementation of the Hub's activities, especially in terms of efficiency.

Also, the review should take into consideration the involvement of all other entities/ bodies that are part of the network, like BCSDN board and BCSDN council and to check if there is an overlapping of tasks and responsibilities in some of the processes that refer to the functioning of the Hub.

Also, this assessment is expected to pay special attention to the potential conflict of interest when it comes to the decision- making process for the re-granting schemes and measures foreseen to avoid this in practice.

The cooperation established between the Executive Office and some of the members of the network being the implementing partners under the above mentioned SIDA agreement should be also subject to this review. In particular, the partnership agreements signed between the EO and the implementing partners (BCSDN members) that are established as global price contracts should be assessed by the consultant who should provide its opinion on the clarity of the agreements and the manner in which deliverables were defined and payment methods determined.

The consultant should have interviews with at least one representative from all entities involved in the process.

2.2 Required outputs

- Report with an opinion on the preparedness of the Regional Hub, including establishment and functioning of the Hub.

3. EXPERTS' PROFILE

Qualifications and skills

Education at least University degree (where a university degree has been awarded on completion of three years' study in a university or equivalent institution) in the field of economics, law, social-educational-political sciences, public administration, business administration, financial management.

Professional experience

- At least 2 compliance assessment reviews and/or audits on organizational setup of NGO's and/or networks, coalitions, alliances and consortia of CSOs and/or other entities;
- Experience in SIDA funded projects will be considered as an asset;
- Experience in performing evaluations on project's/ programme results and achievements and/ or evaluation of performance completed will be considered as an asset.

Language skills

- Fluency in written and spoken English language.

In case an expert does not fulfill any of the above-stated criteria, except for the asset, the offer will be disqualified and will not be subject to further evaluation.

4. AWARD CRITERIA

Best value for money.

The consultant's offer will be evaluated in the following manner:

- Max 80 points for the expertise (where 70% will be given for the expert's qualifications and 30% for the methodology proposed)
- Max 20 points for the financial offer.

The maximum points that an offer may receive are 100, and the minimum is 75.

5. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Individuals who are already involved in some of the governing bodies in the HUB- BCSDN Board, Steering Group, Task Force Group and Executive Office are not eligible to apply for this assignment.

6. LOCATION AND DURATION

➤ Location(s) of assignment:

The Contracting Authority is based in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia.

The address of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network Executive Office is:

Macedonia Street 43-1/9

1000-Skopje, Macedonia.

The involved entities that should be included in the consultant's assessment are located outside the country of residence of the Contracting Authority. Therefore, the consultant may organize the interviews by e-mail, skype calls or other options. The Contracting Authority shall make available all necessary information and contact details to the consultant in this respect.

- **Duration:** 1 month
- **Type of Contract:** global price agreement
- **Starting period**

The indicative timing is March 2020, where the consultant is expected to provide the report upon 20 days as of the date of issue of the Contracting Authority's notification on the start date of the mission.

The specific start date of the mission will be specified upon contract signature, with an official notification issued by the Contracting Authority with prior agreement with the consultant.

7. REPORTING

The consultant shall produce:

- Report on the initial assessment on the preparedness of the Regional Hub, including establishment and functioning of the Hub.

The official language of this contract is English and all reports, analysis, correspondence and documentation prepared within the Contract should be produced in English.

8. PAYMENT TERMS

Payment will be made upon submission of an invoice/ request for payment, subject to the approval of the respective report prepared for the assignment.

9. MAXIMUM BUDGET

The maximum budget for the assignment is EUR 3.000.

10. APPLICATION

Deadline for application

17:00 Central European Time on 28 February 2020 (Friday)

Any application received after this deadline will not be considered.

Application format and details to be provided

The consultant's offer should contain:

- Proposed methodology describing the method of work in details;
- Expert's CV;
- Financial offer.

However, the consultant should be aware that the Contracting Authority may request the provision of supporting documents to confirm the statements given in the respective documents and CVs.

How to apply

Applications must be submitted in hard copy and in electronic version (CD) in English, in a closed envelope, exclusively to the Contracting Authority:

- EITHER by recorded delivery (official post service) to:
- OR hand delivered (including courier services) directly to the Contracting Authority in return for a signed and dated receipt to:

Balkan Civil Society Development Network Executive Office
Macedonia Street No. 43-1/9, 1000-Skopje, North Macedonia

Working hours of BCSDN Executive Office

Monday - Friday 08.30-17.00 C.E.T.

The contract title must be stated on the envelope containing the application:

For Mid-Term Evaluation for the Project

“Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub”

financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)