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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Partner country

Republic of Albania

## Contracting authority

Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development

## Country background

The EuropeAid project 166359/DD/ACT/AL “EU for Municipalities” (EU4M) project in Albania, was launched on 1 June 2021 and has a duration of 30 months, until November 2023, financed by the European Union (EU).

The overarching objective of EU4M is to support the development potential of municipalities and improve environmental and socio-economic conditions in the local communities in Albania. The project will contribute to addressing key constraints facing Albanian municipalities in financial, administrative and management capacity to improve local infrastructure, to provide basic services, deliver new/improved services, create better opportunities for local economic development, and to assume a proactive role to contribute to territorial cohesion and sustainable local development.

The project is implemented by the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) as coordinator, Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development (Co-PLAN) and Eco Partners for Sustainable Development (ECOP) as implementing partners, and the Association of Albanian Municipalities (AAM) and the Association of Local Autonomy of Albania (ALAA), as affiliated entities.

The project will be organized in two main components, targeting the project’s specific objectives’, as follows:

• Component I: Support municipalities in implementing their strategic development objectives and plans to improve local public infrastructure and services

• Component II: Strengthen municipal absorption and management capacities for EU funding

EU4M will include a technical assistance component that will be harmonized and coordinated with the Municipalities for Europe (MfE) project. EU4M technical assistance will be tailored to the needs of the municipalities that will be awarded sub-grants under the two CfPs, via one-to-one and hands-on training to municipal officials through coaching clinics, peer-to-peer exchanges and regional trainings. Local government training needs in the project application and proposal development phase will be covered by MfE..

## Current situation in the sector

The priority of the EU4M will be to support municipalities via grants in the fields of sustainable local economic development, local public infrastructure and services, innovation, job creation, youth empowerment, environmental protection, city greening as well as improving access to and quality of education, social care, public health, sports, culture and other basic local government services. EU4M will provide significant financial support (EUR 1,75 mil) for interventions in local communities. The EU4M grants will have a strong investment component, regardless of the size, ranging from 50-70% of the grant to be dedicated to investments and purchase of supplies to improve the quality of local public infrastructure and services for the benefit of the local communities. The project will also work on strengthening local government capacities in EU funds management, through a targeted technical assistance component that will be coordinated with Municipalities for Europe 2.0.

The EU4M Grant Scheme will include two Call for Proposals (CfP). The first CfP will provide sub-grants to municipalities in the amounts from 100.000 to 200.000 EUR and will make it possible to support small infrastructure interventions that are of benefit to the local communities. The second CfP will provide sub-grants to municipalities in the amounts from 20.000 to 50.000 EUR, and will focus on promoting sustainable local economic development, innovation, promoting youth empowerment, social and economic inclusion and equality, environmental protection etc. The CfPs will be open to all 61 municipalities in Albania and will benefit directly the local communities.

## Related programmes and other donor activities

The EU4M will also build on the findings and assessment of other development projects directly supporting Albanian Municipalities. EU4M team will make sure to work closely with these projects and programmes in order to avoid overlapping of support to the Albanian municipalities in terms of their needs for improving local public infrastructure and the quality of their public services.

The EU4M is looking into MfE project products in terms of local government “absorption” capacities the 2019 Assessment Report: Municipalities in the EU Integration Process of Albania, which is also evaluating the performance of municipalities from the perspective of the EU political, economic and the EU integration criteria. These resources will be crucial in informing the action of EU4M. Similarly, EU4M will coordinate with the EU funded STAR III project and build on the findings and assessments of STAR II, which also conclude that while much has been accomplished over recent years, still there is significant room for improvement in many dimensions of local governance, in particular on the efficiency and effectiveness of local services.

The project team will also look into the EU funded EU4 Schools and EU4Culture which support national and local governments in accelerating the recovery process after the November 26 earthquake, through educational and cultural facility repairs and reconstruction. EU4M will further coordinate with UNDP and UNOPS as project implementers and build on their experience and lessons learned on the process of reconstruction of municipal facilities, to inform the EU4M Grant Scheme design with experience from the ground. EU4M will also coordinate with the “Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD)”, aiming at promoting participatory democracy by improving municipal funding mechanisms for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). ReLOaD brought together several Albanian CSOs to implement projects in line with the local development strategies where municipalities have co- financed a part of these interventions with this initiative.

# OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

## Overall objective

The overarching objective of EU4M is to support the development potential of municipalities and improve environmental and socio-economic conditions in the local communities in Albania.

## 2.2 Specific objective(s)

Throughout its lifetime, the project will aim at achieving the following specific objectives:

Support municipalities in implementing their strategic development objectives and plans to improve local public infrastructure and services

Strengthen municipal absorption and management capacities for EU funding Contributing to higher development potential of Municipalities and better environmental and socio-economic conditions of the local communities

## Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor

The EU4M project will have a lasting impact on the standards of municipal infrastructure enabling quality public services and supporting sustainable local economic development potential of Albanian municipalities. Therefore, it will directly contribute to improving the quality of life and life perspectives of Albanian citizens in their local communities. In a more measurable terms, through EU4M Grants Scheme and technical assistance components the project is supporting:

at least 5 and up to 7 projects supporting community benefiting investments at the municipal level as part of their development plans implemented;

up to 15 small scale investment projects supporting improvements of municipality services towards their communities implemented;

244 municipal staff with strengthened capacities on preparation and application of EU funded grant;

45 municipal staff implemented EU4M projects in compliance with EU standards.

# ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

## Assumptions underlying the project

The key challenges at local level concern shortcomings in necessary public infrastructure as well as financial, administrative and management capacities of local governments, that have a direct impact on the quality of and access to public services and local economic development potential, with rural and mountainous areas being proportionally much more affected than urban ones. In general terms, local governments legal responsibilities are not yet fully matched with adequate human and financial capacities to be able to effectively deliver such responsibilities and play an increasing proactive role towards building territorial cohesion and promoting sustainable local economic development. Furthermore, prioritising the implementation of municipal investments based on infrastructure needs and financial capacities is also a major challenge.

Key assumptions of the project are:

- Sufficient no. of quality projects proposed for financing via EU4M by municipalities;

- Municipalities propose mature projects with quality technical documentation for financing that can be implemented in a timely manner;

- Municipalities have sufficient capacities to absorb and manage the grants provided by the European Union through the EU4M project;

- Municipal staff will be engaged to and will absorb the capacity development measures planned for delivery by the EU4M project;

- Beneficiaries co-financing is available for individual projects;

- Beneficiaries’ capacity to cope with Value Added Tax costs of the projects financed via EU4M grants is ensured via formal commitments in the municipal annual and medium-term budget programs.

## Risks

Key risks facing the project implementation include:

- Weak municipal capacities in grant application, and weak, under elaborated or insufficiently mature project proposals, unaccompanied by sound technical documentation, which may result in delays of project implementation;

- Weak municipal capacities in grant implementation, monitoring and reporting by municipalities, including procurement processes, including lack of familiarity with EU rules and procedures;

- Weak participation and engagement of relevant municipal staff in EU4M trainings and capacity development measures targeting municipalities;

- High municipal staff turnover, in particular in key positions such as financial managers/officers, procurement officers/managers, public service delivery officers/managers and EU units officers/managers;

Difficulties (delays) in banking procedures for the opening of dedicated bank accounts for projects implemented with EU funds; bureaucratic and/or slow procedures of Albanian public institutions that may delay eventual authorisations on infrastructure interventions at municipal level;

The EU4M project will respond to these challenges through targeted capacity development measures, in partnership with the Municipalities for Europe 2.0 Project, by integrating the technical assistance of both projects to enable municipalities produce more qualitative applications and strengthen their implementation capacities.

# SCOPE OF THE WORK

## General

### Project description

Provide technical assistance to the EU4M team in monitoring the infrastructure investments of the awarded municipalities.

### Geographical area to be covered

Targeted areas will be all 19 Municipalities of Albania that are supported via grants from the EU4M Project.

## Specific work

The Technical Advisor is expected to provide assistance to the EU4M team on the following:

* Monitor the implementation of the infrastructure investment; works design/technical project, main or detailed works design in accordance with the type of works for which the Grant was awarded.
* If applicable, assess requests for budget reallocation (infrastructure part) if the changes are related to the investment component.
* Any other technical request that may be necessary during project implementations;

**Role and tasks of the technical advisor**

The technical advisor should monitor the investment interventions implemented by the grantee. This will include the field assessment of interventions in accordance with the type of works for which the grant has been awarded and notify accordingly the contracting authority on findings and recommendations.

The technical advisor is expected to provide feedback to any budget reallocation, changes in the plan of activities requested by any of the municipalities part of the EU4M grant scheme, if such request are related to the investment component.

Time schedule for completion of the tasks: April 2023 – October 2023, not more than 30 days.

Briefing- and de-briefing meetings are foreseen as per the timetable and needs of the EU4M team.

## Project management

### Responsible body

Co-Plan, Institute for Habitat Development

### Management structure

Decision-making process is regulated by Contracting Authority.

# LOGISTICS AND TIMING

## Location

This assignment will take place in premises of the EU4Municipality project in Tirana, and in EU4M project targeted areas.

## Start date & period of implementation

The period of implementation of the contract is from April 2023 – October 2023, not more than 30 days.

# REQUIREMENTS

## Technical Advisor

*Qualifications and skills*

* At least Master’s degree in civil engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Architecture or other related fields.
* Good command in English language both in written and speaking.

*General professional experience*

* Minimum of 10 years of overall professional experience in Engineering.

***Specific professional experience***

* At least 10 years of work experience relevant to the assignment; with experience in project management, architectural design and supervision for Public Building rehabilitation and new constructions.
* Previous relevant work experience with EU or other donors funded projects will be an asset

# REPORTS

## Reporting requirements

Main deliverables of the assignment include the following:

* Conduction of field trips for assessing the infrastructure interventions on behalf of the EU4M team (min 1 field mission in each municipality).
* Preparation of written report, for the technical view, in case any grantee request budget reallocation in the investment component.

## Submission & approval of reports

A brief report for each technical assessment made during the grants/projects implementation.

The reports must be written in English. The contracting authority is responsible for approving the reports.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## Definition of indicators

Main deliverables of the assignment with indicators include the following:

Assisting EU4M team during the monitoring of the infrastructure interventions, in 19 Municipalities in Albania, part of the EU4M grant scheme.

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