



## **Request for Proposals**

Services for:

Developmental evaluation of the project Market Access and Business Digitalization Services for Kosovo Companies (ACCESS)

Financed by:

**Austrian Development Cooperation – ADC**

**Co-financed by**

**Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade - MIET**

Implemented by:

**ECIKS LLC**

Beneficiaries:

**Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade – MIET**  
**Ministry of Economy (ME)**  
**Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA)**  
**Business Consultants Council (BCC)**  
**Kosovo Companies**

Contract Nr. 8261-00/2018

Project Start Date: 01.11.2018

Duration: 42 months

Prishtina, April 2021

With funding from  
 **Austrian  
Development  
Cooperation**



**eciks** | Prishtina  
Vienna  
Zürich  
Management Consulting

## Request for Proposals

The Market Access and Business Digitalization Services for Kosovo Companies Project (hereinafter called ACCESS) intends to hire a Consultant or group of Consultants for the developmental evaluation of ACCESS for which this Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued.

ACCESS now invites Consultants to provide the services as described in the Terms of Reference (TOR).

The complete set of documents (TOR) is available here (LINK).

The Consultant(s) will be selected under a Quality Based Selection procedure described in the TOR.

Interested Consultants are invited to submit an offer in English language by **4pm (CET), 28 April 2021** at the following email address: **access@eciks.com**.

No late proposal shall be accepted.

ACCESS reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal and to annul the selection process and reject all Proposals at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to affected bidders.

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## 1. Context and background

ACCESS implements a series of facilitating interventions that respond to market constraints that hinder pro-poor growth in Kosovo's market systems. The interventions are tailored to trigger systemic changes in behaviors, capabilities and relationships of key market system actors that benefit people living in poverty. The Inclusive Market System Development (IMSD) approach guides this project towards delivering the outcomes, facilitating stakeholders' activities and delivering systemic impact.

The main factors preventing market access and inclusive market development in Kosovo are related to limited enterprise growth opportunities, weak economic and business governance, lack of access to BDS, lack of access to and cost of finance, traditional attitudes that do not favor women in business, etc. Poverty reduction requires providing physical access to markets, remedying failures in markets that make it difficult for people to obtain the resources needed to invest and innovate. Systemic change in the market is required to tackle these challenges and is at the center of this project.

The overall objective is to reduce poverty and exclusion of the poor in Kosovo owing to higher incomes and employment opportunities in more sustainable market systems. ACCESS contributes to strengthening competitiveness of private sector companies and increasing their income through reliable market access and stronger regional and cross-border linkages. Such measures will increase productivity and profitability due to diversified and improved business development and digitalization services (BDS). Key institutional stakeholders throughout Kosovo will be supported to improve and adapt their services and policies to ensure sustainability and inclusion of the poor. The expected outputs are:

1. Relevant new digital tools and services are available to and used by Kosovo's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
2. Kosovo MSMEs improve their digitalization level and establish market linkages
3. Business consultants provide effective and affordable digitalization services to MSMEs.

With measures aiming at granting access to new markets, improving gender-equal access to BDS services and market information as well supporting the business formalization, the project tackles barriers and also promotes several facets of women's empowerment in business and entrepreneurship. Project activities include:

- Increasing business efficiency through facilitating the implementation of e-IDAS (electronic IDentification, Authentication and trust Services)
- Provision of digital services for start-ups and MSMEs through establishing a Founder Service at MTI
- Digital transformation of MSMEs through targeted Business Digitalization Services
- Internationalization of Kosovo SMEs through export promotion activities
- Improvement of Business Digitalization Services through certification of consultants

As a result, 150 jobs will be created/maintained, up to 4,800 private sector companies, their employees, and the wider (poor) population in Kosovo will benefit from project activities. Further beneficiaries are government and business support institutions such as Ministry of Trade and

Industry (MTI), Ministry of Economy and Environment (MEE), Business Consultants Council (BCC), Kosovo Enterprise and Support Agency (KIESA), Kosovo Business Registration Agency (KBRA) etc.

ACCESS has started in November 2018 with an eight-month inception phase. The 36-month implementation phase commenced on 1 July 2019. The project is implemented by ECIKS, funded by the Austrian Development Agency and co-funded by MTI and MEE. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO), the Austrian Institute for SME Research, the Technical University Graz and the Danube University Krems are some of the key partners in this project.

## 2. Evaluation purpose and objectives

The Austrian Development Coordination (ADC) recently assumed an Inclusive Market System Development (IMSD) approach to address rural and economic development in Kosovo. The first initiative with a clear focus on the IMSD approach is the project Market Access and Business Digitalization Services for Kosovo Companies (ACCESS), which is aimed to respond to market constraints that hinder pro-poor growth in Kosovo's market systems. Also, for the implementing company ECIKS, the ACCESS project represents one of the first IMSD interventions.

The developmental evaluation is carried out to assess the relevance of the project, focusing on design quality, beneficiaries, and changing circumstances. In addition, the developmental evaluation will look into the effectiveness of activities under the project, focusing on result achievement.

### 2.1. Purpose, use and users

Purpose: To facilitate learning about the conceptualization of IMSD, a *developmental evaluation* will be commissioned. As such, the main focus of the evaluation is on capturing the relevance of the intervention. To a lesser extent, the evaluation will also assess the effectiveness of the project in light of the IMSD approach.

Use: Results from the accompanying evaluation will be used to:

- i) inform timely and continuous adaptations in implementation of the project, and to
- ii) guide the design of future initiatives with an outlined IMSD approach.

Users: Project team, ECIKS, ADC coordination office, ADA programme managers and technical advisors.

## 3. Evaluation Scope

The evaluation will cover all project activities that have taken place from the beginning of the project, including the ongoing project activities. The geographical focus of evaluation will include municipalities in the regions of Prishtina, Prizren and Ferizaj. The developmental evaluation will take place between months 30-39 of project implementation.

## 4. Evaluation questions

### 4.1 Relevance

#### Design quality:

- How clear was the project logic formulated and how adequate, realistic and feasible were intervention objectives, pathways of change and underlying assumptions?
- To what extent does the project logic fit with the Inclusive Market System Development (IMSD) approach?

#### Beneficiaries:

- To what extent was the design of the intervention relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries?
- To what extent have the challenges, needs and priorities of poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups been considered in the design?
- In how far have targeted actions been integrated to reach out to women being active in the business sector, to contribute to and ensure their involvement as owners of business/companies and service providers?

#### Changing circumstances:

- To what extent did the intervention adapt to changing internal (within project) or external (outside of project) conditions?
- In how far have gender specific barriers been identified and addressed (based on gender analysis, using a gender action plan, definition of a gender specific objective, and integration of targeted actions)?

### 4.2 Effectiveness

- To what extent did the intervention achieve, or is expected to achieve, results at different levels of the results chain, including any differentiated results<sup>1</sup> across groups?
- To what extent were results achieved or are expected to be achieved in an inclusive manner, contributing to pro-poor growth, gender equity and women's empowerment supporting the realization of human rights<sup>2</sup>, and other equity considerations, to ensure that 'no one is left behind'?
- How did the project address existing barriers as identified in the project document, the gender analysis and the social standards and gender recommendations made at project approval stage?

## 5. Design and Approach

The evaluation will employ a Mixed-Methods approach to data collection and data analysis, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

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<sup>1</sup> The question is aimed at elaborating if there were different results among different groups (e.g. ethnic groups, groups in different municipalities, gender etc.)

<sup>2</sup> Although the project is not directly aimed at the realization of human rights, ADC is committed to apply a human-rights based approach throughout all its projects (enshrined in ADC's Three Years Plan).

Sources for data collection / analysis include but are not limited to:

- Review of key project documents (project proposal, Log frame matrix, narrative progress reports, monitoring and result measurement tool), background documents related to project intervention (national strategies, policy papers etc.), documents and reports of Digital Empowerment Initiative, documents and reports of Founder Service;
- Facilitation of (virtual) workshops (in line with the developmental nature of this evaluation) with key project stakeholders for two purposes: 1. to scrutinize the project's Logframe, intended causal pathways and assumptions and check them against reality 2. to allow joint backstopping of project progress.
- (Key) informant interviews with key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, project staff, relevant stakeholders from civil society, line ministries MTI and MEE, KIESA, KBRA, MEE, BCC, ADC, other parties who have cooperated with the project, including STIKK, and VentureUP.
- Focus Groups can be arranged to enhance the understanding gained during key informant interviews and provide an additional method to cross-reference and triangulate information.
- Field visits to Pristina and 2 municipalities in the region of Prizren and Ferizaj. Due to current travel restrictions in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the inception phase and the initial phase of the evaluation's data collection (desk review, some selected interviews, virtual workshops) can be done virtually. To allow for data collection in the project location, the team needs to consist of one expert based in Kosovo with strong expertise in conducting semi-structured interviews/Focus Groups.

To enable direct learning from evaluations and application of results, process use<sup>3</sup> of the evaluation is aspired. Hence, the evaluation will be implemented as an accompanying evaluation<sup>4</sup> Proposals are therefore required to indicate concrete measures allowing the involvement in the evaluation process of the persons steering and managing the project to the extent possible.

## 6. Workplan

The evaluation report will be completed by **31 January 2022**. A detailed timeframe will be developed after the first initial meeting between Consultant(s) and ACCESS and will be included in the inception report. The indicative timeframe is as follows:

Activity	Time
Initial meeting with ACCESS and desk review	Within 15 days after contract is signed
Inception Report	June 2021
Data Collection and preparation	July 2021

<sup>3</sup> Patton (2008), op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> See for example KMU (2015). Begleitende Evaluation und Begleitforschung.

[https://www.degeval.org/fileadmin/users/Arbeitskreise/AK\\_FTI/2015\\_Kaufmann\\_Begleitende\\_Evaluation\\_DeGEval.pdf](https://www.degeval.org/fileadmin/users/Arbeitskreise/AK_FTI/2015_Kaufmann_Begleitende_Evaluation_DeGEval.pdf)

Ongoing / accompanying evaluation <sup>5</sup>	July-Dec 2021
Final Evaluation Report and Presentation	January 2022

Estimated total working days range between 47-55 days.

## 6. Evaluation team

Due to the complexity of the project environment and the variety of topics to be evaluated, bidders are encouraged to offer a team of Consultant(s) / evaluators consisting of at least one expert located in Kosovo. The team should combine the following qualifications:

1. At least 3 references of successfully implemented evaluations of projects in function as team leader, preferably in the sphere of economic development / private sector development
2. At least 3 years of experience with Inclusive Market System Development
3. Proven experience with key concepts of development cooperation relevant in the context of the present project (mainstreaming poverty reduction, gender equality)
4. Strong expertise in qualitative data collection and analysis
5. Strong communication and facilitation skills
6. Previous experience in the methods of accompanying evaluation desired
7. University Degree in Economics, Business Administration or equivalent for proposed staff
8. Fluency in English for proposed staff
9. Fluency in Albanian (for expert located in Kosovo)
10. Proven experience in planning and conducting interviews and focus groups (for expert located in Kosovo).

## 7. Output / Deliverables

The outputs of the evaluation will include

### 1. Inception Report

The inception report must be submitted in the format and according to ADC guidelines and quality criteria:

[https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierungs\\_Leitfaden/Guidelines\\_for\\_Programme\\_and\\_Project\\_Evaluations\\_ADA\\_2020.pdf](https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierungs_Leitfaden/Guidelines_for_Programme_and_Project_Evaluations_ADA_2020.pdf)

The inception report must include (but not limited to):

1. Background, Purpose and Objectives
2. Evaluation Design and Approach
  - 2.1. Methodology and Methods
  - 2.2. Evaluation Matrix
  - 2.3. Data Collection Instruments
  - 2.4. Data Analysis
  - 2.5. Limitations, Risks and Mitigation Measures

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<sup>5</sup> Including regular (virtual) workshops for exchange and with relevant stakeholders engaged in project steering, management and implementation

3. Quality Assurance and Ethical Considerations
4. Workplan
5. Annexes

The length of the inception report should not exceed 15 pages (without annexes).

## 2. Evaluation Report

The evaluation report must be submitted in the format and according to ADC guidelines and quality criteria:

[https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierungs\\_Leitfaden/Guidelines\\_for\\_Programme\\_and\\_Project\\_Evaluations\\_ADA\\_2020.pdf](https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierungs_Leitfaden/Guidelines_for_Programme_and_Project_Evaluations_ADA_2020.pdf)

The evaluation report should be structured as follows:

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Background and Context Analysis
4. Evaluation Design and Approach
  - 4.1. Methodological Approach
  - 4.2. Data Collection and Analysis Tools
  - 4.3. Limitations, Risks and Mitigations Measures
5. Findings
6. Conclusions
7. Recommendations
8. Annexes

The final version of the evaluation report must be branded according to the ADC Visibility Guidelines:

[https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Sichtbarkeitsrichtlinie/2020\\_E\\_N\\_OEZA\\_Visibility\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Sichtbarkeitsrichtlinie/2020_E_N_OEZA_Visibility_Guidelines.pdf)

The length of the evaluation report should not exceed 30 pages (without annexes).

## 8. Budget

The Consultant(s) will provide an offer for his/her services based on these Terms of Reference. The offer should include the total cost of the evaluation in EUR. The Consultant(s) will also cover its own communication, travel and accommodation costs which will arise during the evaluation process. The total available gross budget for the evaluation is EUR 25,000 including all tax, fees and other cost. Proposals exceeding this budget will not be considered in the selection process.

## 9. Coordination / Responsibility

Whenever necessary, ACCESS will offer to the Consultant(s) a working desk and internet connection in the project office in Prishtina. The Consultant(s), however, should have their own premises and equipment for the completion of the evaluation and cannot use only project premises. ACCESS will also provide support for organizing the field mission to Kosovo and

interviews with key stakeholders and beneficiaries. The Consultant is required to respect at all stages the instructions of local authorities on Covid-19 restrictions.

## 10. Selection process for Consultant(s)

The selection will follow the criteria set in section 6.0 of this document (Evaluation Team). The received proposals will be assessed by a commission. The technical and financial proposals will be weighed 80:20 respectively.

The contract shall be awarded through a notice of award to the applicant with highest score. The Consultant(s) achieving the highest score will be invited for negotiations. The aim of the negotiation is to discuss and clarify the Terms of References, tax liabilities, and scope of services and to reach agreement on all points and sign a contract. The expected date and address for contract negotiation is within two weeks from the deadline of proposal submission.

Interested Consultant(s) are invited to submit an offer in English language by **4pm (CET), 28 April 2021** at the following email address: **access@eciks.com**.

No late proposal shall be accepted.

ACCESS reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal and to annul the selection process and reject all Proposals at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to affected bidders.

The offer should include:

1. Technical Offer, including:
  - a. Outline of the proposed evaluation methodology (max. 10 pages) including (i.) an exemplary evaluation matrix for 2 selected evaluation questions; (ii.) proposed criteria for making evaluative judgement; (iii.) foreseen sampling/stratification; (iv) outline of the means to promote process through the accompanying evaluation (see 5.)
  - b. Expertise Profile and relevant references including references of implemented evaluations and at least one sample of work
  - c. CV(s) of expert(s) proposed for the assignment
  - d. Work plan (including number of workdays per activity)
  - e. Statement on availability of the proposed expert(s) during the planned evaluation period
2. Financial offer (remuneration offered) – to be signed by authorized representative of the bidder/each consortium partner

## List of Appendixes\*

Appendix A – Project document

Appendix B – Log frame matrix

Appendix C - Monitoring and Result Measurement Tool

*\*will be made available to the selected Consultant*