

Terms of reference - Midterm internal Evaluation

COVID Resilience & Sustainability (COVID CS&RS)

October 2022

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1. Context of the project

ERIM is a French-registered non-profit, non-governmental organisation providing innovative projects to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, foster pluralistic civil society development, and reduce conflict. ERIM's approach emphasizes partnerships with local development organisations to expand capacity, build sustainable institutions and affect change through training, partnerships, education, research, and grant projects.

2. Objectives of the project

COVID CQ&RS is a 48-month regional project funded by the European Union and implemented by ERIM, the Black Sea Trust, Human Rights House Foundations, Human Rights House Tbilisi and Human Rights House Yerevan. The project aims to support grassroots organisations in six countries in Eastern European countries. The project started in July 2020 in response to the COVID pandemic to support CSOs who were affected by the pandemic. The project provides core support and capacity-building to CSOs, enabling them to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. An important part of the project is to promote civic participation and support CSOs to produce quality information.

Donor : EU

Title : "COVID-19: Civil Society resilience and sustainability

Duration: 4 years

Location: Six Eastern European countries

Lead organization: ERIM

Budget: 4,25 M €

The target groups of this project are:

- CSOs, independent media & media professionals
- Rural youth & general population, in particular vulnerable groups from rural areas

Project's overall objective:

Foster the resilience and sustainability of civil society in Eastern Partnership countries to mitigate the immediate and longer-term impact of COVID 19

Specific objectives:

SO 1: CSOs in Eastern European countries build their sustainability and resilience to the effects

SO 2: CSOs in Eastern European countries are better skilled and equipped to continue

SO 3: CSOs and media in Eastern European countries counter disinformation and fake news, and promote access to reliable information on the pandemic and its impact on communities

Activities:

1.1. Emergency grants for CSOs (all target countries)

1.2 - Psychosocial and legal support to those working for CSOs and initiative groups

2.1: Technical support grants to strengthen CSOs digitalisation

2.2: Capacity development training in the aftermath of the pandemic

2.3: Cooperation within civil society

2.4: Analysis and policy (Ukraine)

- 3.1: Core support to independent media and CSOs working to debunk false information, and provide counter narratives
- 3.2: Media campaign, advocacy and awareness raising grants
- 3.3: Government oversight grants

3. Objectives of the evaluation

The midterm evaluation will focus on the first phase of the project (July 2020 – October 2022), however there is possibility of continuation for the consultant to oversee the final external evaluation of the project, which will take place in Autumn 2024.

The midterm evaluation should consider conclusions from the previous external evaluation led by the European Union. The objectives of the midterm evaluation are:

- To review implementation of the project
- To assess the level of achievement of the outputs and the objectives
- To evaluate impact of the grants on CSOs' sustainability
- To provide recommendations and lessons learned to implementing partners

The evaluation should include the following criteria. Priorities will be given to the analysis of impact and sustainability.

- Relevance:
 - Is the project initial design and strategy relevant to the changing context of implementation? In relation to the changing environment in Eap countries, should the project focus on other topics than resilience to the COVID pandemic?
 - Does the project appropriately respond to the needs and priorities of the target groups?
- Coherence:
 - Does the project contribute to synergies and interlinkages with other actors or interventions in the project target countries?
- Efficiency:
 - Are the activities implemented in line with the plans?
 - Is the project managed effectively, including financial and human resources management, proper work planning, reporting, budgeting, and monitoring?
- Effectiveness:
 - Do the project results contribute to the achievement of the project specific objectives?
 - What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the specific objectives? How has the project adjusted to these dynamics?
- Impact:
 - How are small, medium or large organisations differently impacted by the project?
 - Does the project contribute to help civil society in the target countries to overcome the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - What are the direct and indirect changes produced by the project?
- Sustainability:
 - To what extent do the grants contribute long lasting effects?
 - Do "best practices" emerge from the activities, which of them are likely to continue beyond the project?
 - Should other strategic priorities be addressed in future projects?

4. Methodology of the evaluation

The evaluation will include desk research, interviews and writing of the final report:

- **Secondary sources**, to be gathered through
 - Desk research: review of the material and documentation developed within the project, logframe the reports of the events organised, relevant reports, surveys, etc.
 - the M&E tools created, including the grants monitoring tables, beneficiaries tracking table, questionnaires, and grants progress scales.
 - Final external evaluation
- **Primary data sources**, to be gathered through
 - Semi-structured individual interviews (preferably in person): Individual interviews will be used to collect information from the key informants of the project like project partners, experts and consultants and beneficiaries to get their in-depth opinions about the project; its success, strengths and weaknesses, and future course of direction.
 - Focus groups with implementing partners
 - Interviews and focus groups will be held online and offline, depending on availabilities and possibilities (or not) to travel.

5. Deliverables

- Inception report (max 2 pages) giving a brief description of the project being reviewed and the consultant's methodology
- Final report: evaluation report in English, between 20 and 30 pages, including a table of contents, brief introduction, an executive summary (max 1 page), objectives and methodology, observations, lessons learned and conclusions as well as a list of findings and annexes.
- Short presentation to the project partners, reviewing the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. This presentation (in Power Point) will then be used by ERIM and its partners to present the results to external stakeholders.

6. Organisation and timeline

TRAVELS

If the conditions allow, the consultant will collect data in person and travel to one or several countries where the project is implemented (Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine).

PROVISIONAL CALENDAR FOR THE MIDTERM EVALUATION

This calendar will be reviewed upon availabilities and opportunities (or restrictions) for travels

Selection of the consultant	Submission of the proposition, including Evaluation methodology	By 13 th November 2022	
Inception and desk research	Validate the evaluation tools and methodology with the M&E / Project Manager Select persons to be interviewed and to attend to FG	By 30 th December 2022	2

Data collection	Organize the FG discussions Conduct individual interviews	By 28 th February 2023	12
Analysis	Analysis of data collected through FG and interviews	Spring 2022	5
Reporting	Submission of draft report	By 15 th March 2022	3
	Submission of final evaluation report and presentation to partners	By 30 th March 2022	2
Total estimated working days			24

7. Application

Qualifications

- Degree or professional experience in human rights and or media related fields
- At least five years of experience in external evaluation, including EU funded projects
- Experience in the evaluation of CSO and independent media capacity building and media and information literacy projects would be a strong asset
- Experience in conducting evaluations in a challenging environment
- Fluency in English is mandatory. Fluency in Russian is a plus. Please also mention your level of knowledge (if any) in speaking/ writing and reading in other languages of the project countries (Georgian, Armenia, Romanian);
- Availability and ability to work independently and on a flexible schedule.

You can apply individually or as a team of evaluators. In either case your application should consist of the following:

- Expression of interest, highlighting relevant experience, motivation, and daily rate (2 pages max.)
- A technical proposal detailing your understanding of the main issues of the assessment and the context, a methodology proposal as well as an indicative timetable (maximum 6 pages)
- A detailed financial proposal
- An updated CV(s)
- Contact details for 2 references (per individual)
- If you are interested in overseeing the final evaluation in Autumn 2024, please indicate it in your application, adapting your technical and financial proposal.

Fee:

- Up to 12,000€ for the midterm evaluation

Please send your application and financial offer before 13th November 2022 to scudalb@erim.ngo and ssjogren@erim.ngo