

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

for

### the Implementation Evaluation of Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme

#### 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

##### 1.1. Beneficiary

The beneficiary of this contract is the Managing Authority for Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme (further on referred to as the Programme), located within:

Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDPWA)  
Libertății Blvd. No. 14, District 5  
Bucharest, Romania

##### 1.2. Specific legislation

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1059](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments (Interreg Regulation)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (CPR);
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1058](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund (ERDF Regulation)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1529](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III) (IPA Regulation)
- [EC Staff Working Document](#) on performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027.

##### 1.3. Main Programme documents and available internal documents

- [Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme](#);
- [Performance Framework Methodology](#);
- [Evaluation Plan](#) and results of ongoing evaluation;

- [Timetable of Calls](#), [Applicant's Guide for the first call for proposals](#) and [Applicant's Guide for the second call for proposals](#);
- [First Level Control Guide](#) - 2<sup>nd</sup> edition;
- [Public Procurement Procedures](#) for all Serbian beneficiaries and Romanian private beneficiaries - revision 1 and [list of Public Procurements](#) in projects;
- [Payment lists](#);
- [Instructions](#) to beneficiaries;
- [Jems user manual](#);
- [Communication Strategy](#) and [Annual communication plans](#);
- [Visual Identity Manual](#);
- [Toolbox](#) - Communicating Operations of Strategic Importance;
- Relevant programme procedures (available in Romanian only);
- Description of the management and control system;
- Monitoring Committee [composition](#), [Rules of Procedure](#), [list of Decisions](#) and [summaries of Meetings](#);
- Technical Assistance Strategy;
- [Antifraud Strategy](#);
- [List of financed projects](#);
- [Data transmitted to the EU](#);
- Draft Theory of Change (ToC), produced under a contract signed between the Ministry of European Investments and Projects and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development;
- Financial data at programme level; monitoring data; project reports (viewer access in Jems after declarations of confidentiality and non-disclosure are signed).

#### 1.4. State of play of the Programme

- the Programme was approved in July 2022;
- the official language of the Programme is English;
- MDPWA also carries out the accounting function;
- 2 competitive calls for proposals and 1 call for proposals dedicated to strategic importance and large infrastructure projects were launched, covering the entire programme allocation;
- 133 projects submitted, 31 projects selected (without TA); the 2<sup>nd</sup> call was organised in two steps: 25 concept notes were submitted and 6 of them were invited to submit the full application form;
- 30 contracted projects (without TA);
- TA is reimbursed by EC as a flat rate by applying 10% to the eligible expenditure included in each payment application; 93,13% of ETA allocation contracted by 31 October 2025;
- simplified costs options were used for all calls for proposals launched;
- the programme uses Jems, the electronic monitoring system developed by Interact.

## 1.5. Programme Context

The Programme is the successor of [Interreg-IPA CBC Romania-Republic of Serbia Programme 2014-2020 and Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA CBC Programme 2007-2013](#) and builds upon the experience gained during their implementation, both in terms of programming and implementing provisions.

The Programme is funded by ERDF, IPA III (total Interreg funds of 74,566,827 euro) as well as match-funding from the two participating countries, adding up to a total budget of 87,725,681 euro.

The neighbouring NUTS III border regions covered by the Programme are 3 counties of Romania (Timiș, Caraș-Severin, Mehedinți), representing 9% of the national territory, and 6 districts of Serbia (Severnobanatski, Srednjobanatski, Južnobanatski, Podunavski, Braničevski, Borski), representing 20.8% of the national territory. The Programme territory has a population of roughly 2.2 million and covers 548 km of border length, out of which 235 km of Danube river. There are 8 road border crossings, 2 railroad crossings and 1 fluvial crossing along the border.

The Programme is part of the Interreg A strand in line with art. 3(1)(b)(i) of the Interreg regulation, namely external cross-border cooperation between adjacent border regions of one Member State and one IPA III beneficiary. The CBC strand is supported by the EU to promote integrated and harmonious regional development between neighbouring border regions. The performance framework overview table of the Programme, which correlates the types of actions, the estimated budget, the output and result indicators and the intervention fields, by specific objective, is available on the [Programme's website](#).

The current management and control system is a roll-over of the one from the 2014-2020 programming period, for which the evaluations performed showed that programme implementation was effective in terms of procedures, processes and electronic monitoring system, as well as the support provided to applicants and project partners. As well, no major issues were identified as regards efficiency or effectiveness.

## 1.6. Evaluation Plan context

The [Evaluation Plan](#) of the Programme was approved by the Monitoring Committee in May 2023 and sets out the evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the programme. The objectives of the Evaluation Plan are to ensure, through proper planning and agreed procedural steps, the quality of evaluations carried out during the programming period, to facilitate informed programme management and policy decisions aiming at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme and at streamlining the next programming period, to set the guiding framework for the impact evaluation of the Programme and to ensure the proportionality with the financial allocation of the Programme and the practicality in terms of alignment with the expected evolution of the Programme.

The Evaluation Plan includes the following evaluations:

- one ongoing evaluation performed by MA in order to collect and take on users' feedback;
- one implementation evaluation initially planned for September 2025-May 2026 but postponed in line with the actual evolution of the Programme (the current evaluation exercise);
- one impact evaluation to be carried out during February-October 2028.

**This procedure covers the implementation evaluation only.** The available results of the ongoing process evaluation will be provided to the successful tenderer during contract kick-off, to be used in inception and contract implementation phases.

## 2. CONTRACT OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS

The **overall objective** of this evaluation is to produce specific knowledge on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, internal and external coherence, visibility and commitment to horizontal principles of the programme and to contribute to its management and performance (implementation evaluation).

The risk of decommitment and the achievement of objectives in terms of output and result indicators, as well as forecasting based on the contracted and selected projects, is constantly monitored by the programme bodies in order to make informed decisions, therefore it is not included in the evaluation process. User's feedback on efficiency aspects is also collected constantly and feeds the decision-making process.

Since no major issues were identified during the evaluations for the previous programme as regards efficiency or effectiveness and the management and control system is a roll-over of the previous one, the current evaluation does not aim to cover each and every part of this system and the procedural workflows. Instead, it should investigate whether there are bottlenecks or major issues faced and whether the newly introduced elements were effective in practice - as the use of the HIT, more extensive use of SCOs, financing of operations of strategic importance, large infrastructure and limited financial value projects, TA flat rate.

As regards efficiency, the evaluation should focus on identifying any underused simplification opportunities. The costs of the beneficiaries related to the communication activities are also to be examined, in relation to the communication strategy.

To deepen knowledge on the current programme, but also to feed into the next programming process, the evaluation should also cover aspects related to the Programme's relevance, internal and external coherence and commitment to the horizontal principles.

In terms of **results**, the Consultant shall provide an in-depth targeted analysis on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, internal and external coherence and commitment to horizontal principles of programme implementation until the agreed cut-off date and on the implementation of the communication strategy.

Details shall be provided on:

- evolution of the Programme against initial expectations;
- influencing factors for achieving the Programme's objectives and outcomes;
- effectiveness and durability of the cross-border partnerships established;
- effects of the administrative and financial capacity (programme and project level);
- application of the partnership principle;
- effectiveness of anti-fraud measures;
- existence of major issues affecting the implementation process;
- measures to streamline and simplify operations;
- relevance (response to initial needs, validity taking into account current needs);
- internal coherence and synergic effect of the interventions and coherence with other EU interventions, strategies and initiatives in place;
- inclusiveness and accessibility of the Programme and application of horizontal principles in Programme documents and by the financed projects;
- efficiency and effectiveness of communication strategy, tools, visibility, support to projects' communication activities.

### 3. SCOPE OF THE WORK

#### 3.1. Coverage

The evaluation shall cover all actions undertaken under the Programme, in the 2021-2027 programming period. All specific objectives of the Programme shall be covered, as well as TA activities. The evaluation shall refer to all types of calls for proposals and financed projects and shall take into account the entire eligible area of the programme. Project/TA beneficiaries outside programme eligible area (e.g. at central level) shall also be taken into consideration.

#### 3.2. Target audience

The target audience of this evaluation includes the following groups:

- A. for the evaluation of the management and implementation of the programme
  - programme bodies, programme stakeholders, programme beneficiaries, the European Commission, Interact, other Interreg programmes;
- B. for the communication strategy
  - programme bodies, programme stakeholders, programme beneficiaries, the European Commission.

#### 3.3. Methodology

Tenderers shall present in their offers the most suitable and effective tools and methods for reaching the objectives and achieving the results of the evaluation and for answering the evaluation questions, specifying the type of methods used to answer each evaluation question. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is expected. The methodology shall reflect existing information sources, the need to search for additional information as well as the scope of the interventions, being thus organized as to enable a traceable link between the interventions and the methods, for both quantitative and qualitative tools. The methods proposed in the offer will be further outlined and detailed in the inception report. A list of available data is presented in section 1.3.

The mix of quantitative and qualitative methods may include data collection and analysis, desk research, interviews (with both Programme bodies and beneficiaries), surveys, stakeholder analysis, case studies. The methods used to validate the findings and results should be specified. At least triangulation is expected for cross-verifying the findings. Any questionnaires proposed should not duplicate the collection process under the ongoing evaluation, which will be provided to the Consultant at kick-off time.

The Consultant is expected to organise the conclusions and recommendations around the objectives of this evaluation and in answering to the evaluation questions, showing a clear link between findings, conclusions and recommendations. It is not mandatory for findings and conclusions to be followed by related recommendations. Recommendations shall only be made where it is deemed necessary to make improvements, for the current or future programming period. Each recommendation shall be clearly formulated, numbered and prioritised. Likewise, in case options regarding future actions are available, these shall also be clearly listed. In order to support the programme bodies in implementing the recommendations, but also to ensure that the recommendations made are of practical nature, tentative action plans for implementing each recommendation are also requested, to serve as guidance for the programme bodies. Future take-up of any of the proposed actions remains at the decision of the programme bodies.

#### 3.4. Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions mentioned and briefly explained below shall be answered.

Should the tenderers find it necessary, they may propose in their offer or in the inception phase additional evaluation questions or themes that serve the purpose of this evaluation exercise.

### **Effectiveness**

Q1. To what extent is the Programme delivery taking place as expected initially?  
*(whether the evolution of the programme is in line with the initial expectations of the Programme bodies)*

Q2. Are there any internal or external factors that foster or affect the process of achieving the Programme's objectives and outcomes, at programme level or by specific objective?

*(how does the delivery mechanism work and which factors have a contribution to achieving Programme outputs and results - e.g. use of HIT, more extensive use of SCOs, various types of projects financed, effectiveness in achieving the set objectives with the 50% investments rule)*

Q3. To what extent is the administrative and financial capacity of the Programme bodies and of the beneficiaries a success or hindering factor?

*(whether the capacity of programme bodies and beneficiaries affects or supports Programme delivery towards objectives; TA flat rate is also to be investigated under this question)*

Q4. Did the Programme take the necessary measures to effectively involve relevant partners in programme management and delivery?

*(whether the measures taken by the programme to involve relevant partners in programme management and delivery are effective)*

Q5. Are the anti-fraud strategic measures taken by the Programme bodies in order to prevent, detect and correct fraudulent activities effective? What can be improved?

*(whether the responsibilities of the actors involved in preventing, detecting and responding to fraud are clearly set in the anti-fraud strategy and effectively put into practice and what can be improved to minimise the opportunities for individuals to commit fraud and to provide an effective response if fraud occurs)*

### **Efficiency**

Q6. Are there any bottlenecks or major issues affecting the efficiency of the Programme's implementation system?

*(whether the efficiency of the Programme is affected by deficiencies in the implementation system)*

Q7. To what extent does the Programme use the available options to streamline and simplify operations?

*(whether the Programme found the right balance to streamline and simplify operations or more options should be taken into account)*

### **Relevance**

Q8. To what extent does the programme strategy respond to the needs identified at programming stage?

*(whether the Programme strategy responded in practice to the needs identified initially in the programming stage)*

Q9. To what extent is the programme strategy relevant to the current needs of the people in the cross-border area?

*(whether the needs in the Programme area changed over time and are addressed by the Programme strategy)*

### **Internal and external coherence**

Q10. To what extent are the interventions under the Programme internally coherent and able to create synergic effects?

*(how well do the Programme interventions work together and whether their interaction is capable of creating synergic effects)*

Q11. To what extent is the Programme coherent with other EU interventions having similar objectives which also cover the eligible territory?

*(how well does the Programme work in conjunction with the other EU interventions - complementarities, gaps)*

Q12. To what extent is the Programme coherent with the strategies and initiatives in place?

*(e.g. EUSDR, EUSAIR, New Bauhaus Initiative, green infrastructure, strategic use of public procurement)*

### **Inclusiveness, non-discrimination and other horizontal principles**

Q13. Is the programme inclusive and accessible to all target groups?

Q14. To what extent are the horizontal principles covered adequately and clearly within the guidelines for applicants and programme monitoring arrangements?

Q15. How do the financed projects contribute to the application of the horizontal principles?

*(this set of three questions aims to cover at least equal opportunities and non-discrimination (including minorities), equality between men and women, sustainable development, DNSH)*

### **Visibility/Communication Strategy**

Q16. Do the communication activities/actions carried out by the programme authorities lead to the achievement of the general and specific objectives set out in the Communication Strategy?

Q17. Are the communication activities/actions of the Programme taken in a fair, just and inclusive manner for all relevant parties of the Programme area (beneficiaries, stakeholders, general public)?

Q18. Which are the instruments and tools that have the highest outreach to potential beneficiaries/beneficiaries/stakeholders/general public?

Q19. How could the Programme's visibility be increased?

Q20. How effective was the programme in supporting project communication activities and in reducing related costs on the beneficiaries?

*(this set of five questions targets the evaluation of the communication strategy of the Programme, aims to point at what would be needed to reach more people in terms of Programme visibility and investigates the costs of the beneficiaries related to the communication activities)*

## **3.5. Activity management**

### **3.5.1. Relevant details regarding the Contracting Authority**

As regards the Contracting Authority, the entities involved in the implementation of this evaluation contract are:

#### **The Managing Authority, the Head of MA**

The Managing Authority is responsible for managing the programme with a view to delivering the objectives of the programme.

#### **MA Unit**

Unit MA Romania-Serbia within MDPWA/ Directorate General European Territorial Cooperation/ Directorate MA for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes is in charge with managing the Programme.

#### The Evaluation Unit

The Evaluation Unit within MDPWA/ Directorate General European Territorial Cooperation/ Directorate MA for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes ensures the evaluation function for the Interreg programmes. Evaluation Unit staff is in charge with the day-to-day contact with the Consultant.

Details on the evaluation function may be found in the Programme's Evaluation Plan.

#### The Monitoring Committee

The overall monitoring of the Programme's implementation lies within the competencies of the MC.

The Consultant may be asked to present the evaluation results during a Monitoring Committee meeting held in the eligible area of the programme. The travel costs for this participation shall be covered by the Consultant.

#### The Evaluation Steering Committee

An Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) shall be convened and shall oversee the implementation of this evaluation, in line with the Evaluation Plan.

The ESC shall be consulted on the inception report and on the draft evaluation reports and shall endorse the final evaluation reports, based on the quality grid previously filled in by the Evaluation Unit. Details on the decision-making process and composition of the Evaluation Steering Committee may be found in the Programme's Evaluation Plan.

#### 3.5.2. Expectations as regards the Tenderer/Consultant

The team of key experts to be involved in this evaluation should be identified in the offer, describing their skills and qualifications, quantifying the input of each member of the team in terms of days and explaining the distribution of tasks between the different team members involved. Coordination, guidance and quality control measures to be taken by the Tenderer shall also be detailed in the offer. The Consultant may also involve non-key experts in performing the evaluation, their CVs being submitted with the inception report.

Although the official programme language is English and deliverables are mainly requested in English language, the offer should take into account the fact that the use of Romanian and Serbian languages may be necessary to analyse certain documents (e.g. pieces of legislation, internal procedures) and collect data from beneficiaries. As well, any travel and accommodation and translation and interpretation costs needed by the evaluators in order to perform this evaluation shall be covered by the Consultant.

The Consultant is responsible for the timely execution of the project and of the tasks set out in these terms of reference. The delivery of information, data, and feedback on the outputs produced is crucial for the timely implementation of the project. For this reason the Consultant shall take the responsibility of making clear requests indicating the date by which information, data and feedback on the outputs produced is required in order for the evaluation to proceed according to the timetable.

The Consultant shall comply with the requirements set by the contact persons from the Contracting Authority. The Consultant shall also provide the contact persons from the Contracting Authority with all information in relation to the services and the status of implementation of the activities under the contract as the contact persons may at any time request.

As well, the Consultant shall ensure impartiality and lack of conflict of interests from the experts involved and the confidentiality of all information and data gathered and processed during the implementation of this evaluation. To prevent conflict of interest and ensure confidentiality, signed declarations of impartiality, objectivity and confidentiality are requested from the key experts and team leader.

All deliverables are required in English, with executive summaries and some condensed visuals also being required in Romanian and Serbian. The Tenderer should be aware that a high standard of written English is needed and that clarity and concision of expression is required in all deliverables, as well as highly visual formats. While preparing the offer the Tenderer should also take into account that eye-catching one-pagers and info graphics, as well as project stories and testimonials, are required to be delivered together with the final evaluation reports.

The Tenderer shall assemble the proposed team in such way so as to ensure high-quality deliverables in both content and presentation, with full adherence to the required language standards, to facilitate the dissemination of evaluation results. Previous experience in data collection and visualization technologies is expected for qualitative results and their eye-catching presentation.

It is encouraged that the Team Leader plays a vital role in the quality assurance process and in steering the work of the team of experts. In case a Contract Manager that is not part of the evaluation team is appointed by the Consultant for regular contact with the Contracting Authority and administrative details, this person should be experienced enough to ensure smooth contract implementation.

The present terms of reference shall form an integrant part of the contract, as annex.

### 3.5.3. Risks

Possible risks that may affect the implementation of the contract are:

- a) collaboration and communication difficulties between parties, that may be generated by high workload of staff working within the Programme structures, reduced expertise in Interreg of the staff involved by the Consultant, differences in understanding the provisions within the ToR or Inception Report, etc.
- b) the data and information that can be provided by the Programme structures is insufficient for fulfilling the tasks within the ToR;
- c) the need to add new activities/tools to be able to achieve the results of the contract.

For the above-identified risks, the Tenderer has to propose measures in view of risks mitigation/elimination. The Tenderer may include other possible identified risks in the offer.

### 3.5.4. Equal opportunities

Equal opportunities policy without distinction on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation will be applied during the implementation of this evaluation.

### 3.5.5. Logistical aspects

Offices and equipment for the evaluators shall be provided by the Consultant.

The Consultant shall ensure that experts are adequately supported and equipped. In particular it shall ensure that there is sufficient administrative, secretarial and interpreting provision to enable experts to concentrate on their primary responsibilities. The Consultant shall also transfer funds as necessary to support the activities under the

contract and to ensure that the involved employees and collaborators are paid regularly and in a timely fashion.

The Consultant shall ensure the following:

- the necessary workspace for carrying out the activities;
- accommodation, per diem and transport expenditures for the evaluators;
- IT equipment, desk furniture and access to Internet, needed by the experts to carry out the activities;
- communication expenses;
- secretariat services (if needed);
- any cost related to translation of documents (needed by the experts to carry out their work).

No equipment is to be purchased on behalf of the Contracting Authority.

### 3.6. Timeframe, deliverables and Contracting Authority-Consultant interaction

The implementation period of the contract activities, not taking into account the payment of the final amount in the contract, is expected not to exceed 8 months. Tenderers may find below the compulsory **deliverables** that must be submitted by the evaluators. However, the Tenderers may propose additional deliverables that are within the scope of the contract.

Deliverable	Timing	Related meetings	Details
Deliverable 1: minutes of the kick-off meeting	3 days after the kick-off meeting	The kick-off meeting shall be organised within 7 days of the order for commencing the contract activities	Maximum 3 pages (excluding annexes) focusing on proposals and conclusions
Deliverable 2: inception report	Within 3 weeks from the kick-off meeting	Coordination meeting only if requested by one of the parties	Maximum 12 pages (main text, excluding annexes) Methodological report covering all tasks, specifying expected results, methodology (including possible limits and difficulties), detailed tools for field research, work plan and staff mobilization (including proposals for short-term experts)  The consultants are advised to proceed with their work also in absence of comments by the Contracting Authority to the inception report
Deliverable 3: interim activity report Deliverable 4:	Within 3 months after the inception report is approved	Meeting to present the preliminary results of the evaluation, if needed	<u>Interim activity report</u> Maximum 6 pages, summarising the activities undertaken during the first implementation period

<p>draft evaluation report</p> <p>Deliverable 5: draft communication evaluation report</p>		<p>Further coordination meetings only if requested by one of the parties</p>	<p>and planning next steps, also reflecting the progress in data collection</p> <p><u>Draft evaluation report</u></p> <p>Maximum 60 pages (main text, excluding annexes)</p> <p>Covering all tasks and evaluation questions (except the ones related to the evaluation of communication) and including any preliminary suggestions as basis for recommendations</p> <p><u>Draft communication evaluation report</u></p> <p>Maximum 30 pages (main text, excluding annexes)</p> <p>Covering all tasks and evaluation questions related to the evaluation of communication and any including preliminary suggestions as basis for recommendations</p>
<p>Deliverable 6: final evaluation report</p> <p>Deliverable 7: communication evaluation report</p>	<p>Within 1 month after all comments and recommendations are submitted on the draft reports</p>	<p>Final debriefing and concluding meeting before final evaluation reports are submitted, if needed</p>	<p>Built upon the draft reports, improved and revised based on the comments received</p> <p>Final evaluation reports containing also a sufficiently detailed analysis of the activities performed to implement the contract and a clear overview of all methodological aspects detailed in the annexes.</p> <p>Both reports containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- executive summary in English, Romanian and Serbian briefly presenting the objective of the evaluation and the main conclusions and recommendations</li> <li>- concise analysis for each evaluation criterion and answers to all related evaluation questions</li> <li>- recommendations, if and where necessary</li> </ul> <p>Annexes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a table presenting, for each</li> </ul>

			<p>recommendation, the link between findings, conclusions and the respective recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- draft action plan for each recommendation (indicative)</li> <li>- the detailed analyses which support the findings, conclusions, recommendations</li> <li>- data sources used</li> <li>- evaluation tools used</li> <li>- list of documents and literature reviewed</li> <li>- list of interviews</li> </ul> <p>Also delivered with the final report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an eye-catching <a href="#">one pager</a>, in English, Romanian and Serbian, presenting overall evaluation results</li> <li>- eye-catching <a href="#">infographics</a>, one for each specific objective</li> <li>- any catchy project stories and testimonials identified</li> </ul>
--	--	--	---

In order to allow the MA team to follow the evolution of the evaluation, in addition to the interim activity report regular contact shall be kept with the evaluators (preferably via e-mail) in order to timely identify challenges and take appropriate corrective measures. In case coordination details are discussed over phone or video conversations, the Consultant shall draft and submit to the MA via e-mail a list of decision points for validation.

The related meetings presented in the table above for each deliverable represent a practical instrument in managing the relation between the Contracting Authority and the Consultant, are to be formal and organised by the Contractor, if their practical value is agreed by both parties. These meetings may be organised as online meetings. It is preferable that the kick-off meeting takes place in physical form.

All reports shall be made available to the Contracting Authority in due time, taking into consideration reasonable time to perform quality check and consult the MA Unit and ESC. Comments have to be integrated in the documents by the Consultant or discussed if necessary.

As a general rule, 5 working days shall be the usual expected time for the Contracting Authority to send comments on the electronic versions of the deliverables received and for the Consultant to submit the revised versions. This shall be regarded as a maximal duration only and shall be reduced in practice depending on the type of deliverable and on the type of comments. As well, should the length and complexity of the deliverables or the depth of the comments not allow for reasonably observing this deadline, prolongations may be agreed via e-mail.

As regards ESC consultations, the timeframe for written consultations is of 7 working days. The comments of the stakeholders on the draft and final reports shall be submitted to the

Consultant within 2 working days after the MC procedure is concluded. As a general rule and unless specified otherwise, the comments received during the MC consultation on the draft evaluation reports shall be taken into account in drafting the final reports.

Based on the comments on the draft reports made by any of the entities involved in the implementation of this evaluation, the Consultant has to prepare the final versions of the reports to be approved and treated as milestones for making payments.

The deliverables are required in electronic format (Word/editable format and PDF format or equivalent application compatible with MS Office) within the timeframe provided in the table above. All intermediate electronic versions shall be sent in Word format or equivalent application compatible with MS Office. After the electronic version is accepted for each deliverable, an electronic version signed by the Team Leader shall be sent to the Contracting Authority. Printed reports (hard copies), signed in handwriting, may be accepted instead of the digitally signed versions, these being submitted to the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration headquarters, Libertății Blvd. no. 14, Bucharest, Romania.

The reports should have a title page, which should include: report title, date issued and period of implementation covered, and the name and address of the Consultant. A list of essential contact persons and the drafting team list are also to be included.

The final version of all other deliverables is also required in electronic format, including in editable form. In addition, deliverables with visual character accompanying the final report should be designed so as to be used directly in the process of communicating the results to the decision-makers and to the general public.

The Consultant should take into account that evaluation results should also be presented in visual format in the final evaluation reports (e.g. maps, charts, tables, text boxes) and that the reports should have an easy-to-follow and easy-to-read format. Therefore, the reports should be formatted with a clean and spacious layout to enhance readability. Ample white space should be used around text blocks and headings to create an airy feel. Fonts should be legible and sized appropriately, with sufficient paragraph spacing to avoid clutter. Headings and subheadings should be clearly differentiated to guide the reader through the content smoothly. Overall, the design should prioritize clarity and ease of reading by avoiding dense text and using layout elements that allow information to be easily absorbed.

The Inception Report (Deliverable 2) and the final reports (Deliverables 6 and 7) will be, upon their approval and submittance of the signed versions, milestones for the release of payments. The draft evaluation reports (Deliverables 4 and 5) will have to pass a first quality check before the related payment (second instalment of payment) can be released, conditional on the approval of the interim activity report by the Contracting Authority (Deliverable 3). Draft reports pass the first quality check when their quality is considered reasonable enough to be submitted to ESC for consultation. Payments will only be made after processing of the corresponding invoices by the Contracting Authority. Formal approval of the signed versions of Deliverables 4 and 5 by the Contracting Authority may only take place after the related ESC consultation is finalized. As specified in section 3.5.2, the comments received during the ESC consultation on the draft evaluation reports shall be addressed while drafting the final reports, unless specified otherwise.

### 3.7. Quality criteria

The Consultant is fully responsible for the quality of the contract results, according to the contractual provisions. In this sense, the Consultant shall ensure that the reports are delivered in time, that they cover all evaluation questions and that they meet the requirements set out in these terms of reference. The evaluation reports prepared by the

experts will be subject to quality control undertaken by the Evaluation Unit and, subsequently, by the MA Unit and then sent to ESC.

The quality of the inception report shall be assessed using the Quality Grid presented in Annex 1 and the final reports shall be assessed using the Quality Grid presented in Annex 2. For a smooth approval process, the Consultant is encouraged to take into account the elements included in these quality grids while drafting the reports.

The Tenderer shall establish and describe in the submitted offer an internal quality assurance process for the reports to be produced within the scope of the current terms of reference.

#### 4. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

##### 4.1. Location:

The operational base for carrying out the evaluation activities shall be at the Consultant’s offices. However, data collection and evaluation activities should be carried out mainly in relation to the Programme’s eligible area (and Bucharest, where the Managing Authority is located).

##### 4.2. Commencement date & Period of execution

The evaluation is intended to commence as soon as possible, subject to the evolution of the public procurement procedure. The period of execution of the contract will be maximum 9 months from issuing the commencement order.

##### 4.3. Performance indicators

Contract implementation shall be considered using the following performance indicators:

- quality of final evaluation report, assessed using the quality grid annexed to the Terms of Reference (checklist for addressing the evaluation report), taking into account the following aspects:
  - executive summary;
  - introduction;
  - background and context;
  - methodology;
  - main findings;
  - conclusion, lessons learnt and emerging good practices;
  - recommendations and policy implications;
  - annexes and references;
  - general considerations;
- timely delivery of all deliverables that fulfil the conditions set in these Terms of Reference.

Category	Performance indicator	Expected performance	What is measured	Evaluation method	Scope
Quality level	Final evaluation report that passes the conformity check by applying the checklist for assessing the	The applicable quality statements under the 9 headings included in the checklist for assessing	To what extent the applicable quality statements are addressed, under the 9 headings: 1. executive summary; 2. introduction;	The final evaluation report is evaluated based on the applicable quality statements and has to pass the conformity check as regards all 9 headings	To evaluate the quality level of deliverables

Category	Performance indicator	Expected performance	What is measured	Evaluation method	Scope
	evaluation report annexed to the Terms of Reference	the evaluation report annexed to the Terms of Reference are fully addressed or there is reasonable justification for their partial/non addressing	3.background and context; 4. methodology; 5. main findings; 6.conclusion, lessons learnt and emerging good practices; 7.recommendations and policy implications; 8. annexes and references; 9. general considerations		
Delivery of deliverables	Final deliverables delivered within agreed timeframe	Final deliverables are delivered within agreed timeframe	Timely delivery of deliverables	Highly compliant - delivered within timeframe  Compliant - delivered right after agreed deadline but without triggering delays of overall evaluation calendar  Acceptable - delivered after agreed deadline and leading to neglectable delays of overall evaluation calendar  Non-compliant-delivered long after agreed deadline, leading to delays of the overall evaluation calendar  Highly non-compliant-delivered long after agreed deadline, leading to major delays of the overall	To evaluate the timely delivery of deliverables

Category	Performance indicator	Expected performance	What is measured	Evaluation method	Scope
				evaluation calendar	

#### 4.4. Reception

The reception for the provided services shall take place at MDPWA premises in Libertății Blvd. no. 14 and shall be recorded in reception reports based on the reports drawn up by the provider and on the supporting documents regarding the provision of services.

### 5. TENDER REQUIREMENTS

#### 5.1. Qualification criteria

The Tenderer shall provide the qualified experts to carry out the tasks requested by these terms of references, is responsible for their work and shall ensure the availability of the experts in line with the activities assigned to them in the offer.

The Tenderer shall ensure that the key and non-key experts are familiar with the qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and with the relevant EU legislation and Romanian and Serbian national legislation. Also, the experts should demonstrate a very good linguistic ability to communicate and draft texts of high-quality standards in English.

To prove its technical and professional capacity by previous similar experience, the Tenderer (the combined capacity of all involved entities) has to meet the following qualification requirements:

The Tenderers shall submit proof that within the last six years prior to the deadline for submitting the offers they have completed at least 1 similar multi-country project/contract (involving research, collection and analysis of information in at least 2 EU Member States, accession or neighbourhood countries) or, alternatively, at least 2 separate projects/contracts performed in two different countries that involve research, collection and analysis of information in a Member State, accession or neighbourhood country, as well as between 2 and 4 evaluations of regional/territorial/socio-economic development programmes/policies/interventions, with a minimum cumulated value of at least 250.000 RON VAT excluded. Justification: according to article 178 of Law no. 98/2016, as subsequently amended and supplemented, the contracting authority has the right to formulate, in the procurement documents, requirements related to the technical and professional capacity that are necessary and appropriate to ensure that economic operators have the human and technical resources and experience necessary to perform the public procurement contract to an appropriate quality standard.

#### 5.2. Key evaluation team composition and required competencies

The **key experts** proposed by the Tenderer have to meet the following minimum qualitative and quantitative requirements:

##### Team Leader:

- bachelor's degree or equivalent in a field of social sciences (economics, management, political science, international relations, etc.), law, engineering, mathematics, statistics or other field relevant to the services to be provided;
- practical knowledge of EU programmes by having at least 3 years of experience in evaluation/management/implementation of EU programmes related to 2014-2020 and/or 2021-2027 programming periods;

*Note: the experience required is related to the evaluation/management/implementation of EU programmes, not of projects financed under EU programmes.*

- experience as team leader/coordinator or equivalent position in at least 2 EU funded projects/contracts or equivalent;
- experience in working in a multicultural environment by previous participation in multi-country projects/contracts/activities/tasks;
- excellent knowledge of English, proven by language certificate (equivalent to C1 or C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) or by references (on reports produced in English or on previous participation in projects/activities implemented in English) or by other types of documents issued by public or private entities, that prove the fulfilment of the English language requirement.

## 2 evaluation experts

- bachelor's degree or equivalent in a field of social sciences (economics, management, political science, international relations, etc.), law, engineering, mathematics, statistics or other field relevant to the services to be provided;
- practice of data collection, management and analysis techniques by participation as expert in at least 3 programme evaluation contracts for EU programmes related to 2014-2020 and/or 2021-2027 programming periods;
- good knowledge of English proven by language certificate (equivalent to B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) or by references (on reports produced in English or on previous participation in projects/activities implemented in English) or by other types of documents issued by public or private entities, that prove the fulfilment of the English language requirement.

## 1 evaluation expert for evaluation of the communication activities

- bachelor's degree or equivalent in a field of social sciences (economics, management, political science, international relations, etc.), law, engineering, mathematics, statistics or other field relevant to the services to be provided;
- practical knowledge of EU programmes by having at least 1 year of experience in evaluation/management/implementation of EU programmes related to 2014-2020 and/or 2021-2027 programming periods;

*Note: the experience required is related to the evaluation/management/implementation of EU programmes, not of projects financed under EU programmes.*

- practice of evaluating communication activities by participation as expert in at least 2 evaluation projects/contracts having tasks related to evaluation of communication strategies/activities, or evaluation of communication;
- good knowledge of English proven by language certificate (equivalent to B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) or by references (on reports produced in English or on previous participation in projects/activities implemented in English) or by other types of documents issued by public or private entities, that prove the fulfilment of the English language requirement.

In addition, at least one of the Key experts (Team Leader/evaluation experts/communication expert) should have knowledge and practice in statistics, at least one in stakeholder management and at least one should have in-depth knowledge of European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg programmes. Previous experience of more key evaluation team members in evaluation/management/implementation of European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg programmes/projects represents an advantage that can be capitalised upon.

For demonstrating the fulfilment of the above-mentioned requirements, relevant documents shall be submitted for each expert, namely:

- job descriptions, employment/service contracts, references/recommendations, certificates, extracts of or links to previous evaluation reports/studies or any other similar documents;
- copies of diplomas or equivalent.

The offer shall include the updated CVs of the proposed experts (including Team Leader), signed. All CVs shall preferably be presented in Europass format (link: <https://europass.europa.eu/en>).

A table pointing out the fulfilment of each of the required competencies by each of the proposed experts (including Team Leader) and indicating the documents attached to the offer that stand proof of this fulfilment shall be included in the Administrative part of the offer, as well as declarations of availability for each Key expert/Team Leader.

The Consultant shall not make changes in the key evaluation team without prior written consultation of the Contracting Authority. It is recommended that the Consultant will make such changes only in exceptional cases.

Cost for additional non-key or short-term experts, as needed, are considered to be included in the financial offer.

### 5.3. Measures to ensure impartiality and functional independence of evaluators

In order to avoid possible conflict of interest, the experts proposed for the implementation of this evaluation must comply with the following terms:

- not members or observers in the Monitoring Committee of the Programme;
- not having been involved in any way in the calls for proposals launched under the Programme, as consultant, as evaluator;
- not having been involved in the management of projects financed under the Programme;
- not having been involved in the management verifications.

### 5.4. Contents of the offers:

All offers must be clear, complete and consistent, meeting all the requirements laid down in the tendering documents. All offers shall be drafted in English.

Given the fact that a high standard of written English is needed in implementing the contract and that clarity and concision of expression is required in all deliverables, Tenderers are advised to follow the same rules in drafting the offer. Extracts from the present terms of reference are not encouraged to be included in the offer.

The offers shall include:

- a Technical offer;
- a Financial Offer

It is recommended that the technical offer does not exceed 55 pages in total (excluding cover pages, indexes etc). The technical offer shall include:

#### A. Concept of the work:

- a description of the overall concept for addressing the requirements of the present terms of reference (approx. 2 pages);
- a description of how the objectives will be achieved (approx. 2 pages);

**B. Proposed methodology:**

- an outline of the general understanding and key aspects for each evaluation question (approx. 4 pages);
- a description of the specific approaches, methods and tools to be applied in order to achieve the expected results and the rationale behind (approx. 22 pages);
- a summary extracting how the specific multi-national character of the evaluated Programme was taken into account in the proposed methodology and related activities and presenting the added value of the methodology proposed, from this point of view (approx. 2 pages);
- a description of the main sources and data to be used, collected and processed (approx. 3 pages);

**C. Organisation and management of the work:**

- an explanation of the role and extent of the team members’ participation in the service provision and how the composition of the team will be organised and utilised, highlighting where relevant how previous experience in European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg programmes/contracts/projects is capitalised upon (approx. 5 pages);
- a detailed work plan that also includes a table presenting the allocation of man days for each activity proposed, broken down by type of experts, as well as totals (approx. 5 pages);
- a timetable with the deliverables envisaged and their overall contents and a Gantt chart or equivalent that includes milestones (approx. 5 pages);

**D. Quality control measures:**

- a description of the quality control measures proposed concerning the deliverables in terms of contents and language, visual requirements and continuity of service in case of absence of team members (approx. 3 pages);
- an assessment of the potential challenges involved (risk assessment and proposed mitigation measures) (approx. 2 pages).

The budget in the financial offer shall be presented as total cost and also split by the three expected tranches, according to the percentages included in Section 7. The amounts will serve as basis for the corresponding invoices.

**6. Selection of offers**

Only admissible offers will be assessed based on the best quality-price ratio.

**6.1. Qualitative award criteria**

The assessment of the technical quality is based on the ability of the Tenderer to meet the purpose of the contract, as described in the present terms of reference.

The following evaluation criteria shall be used to determine the technical merit of the offers, producing a total score of maximum 70 points:

No	Qualitative award criteria	Maximum score
I	Concept of the work and quality of the proposed methodology - covered under sections A and B of the technical offer	40

II	Organisation and management of the work and quality control measures - covered under sections C and D of the technical offer	30
<b>Total number of points</b>		<b>70</b>

## 6.2. Calculation of the value for money

The contract is awarded to the Tenderer submitting the offer with the best value for money (with the highest score).

A weight of 70% is given to quality and of 30% to price respectively.

The score is calculated for each offer by applying the evaluation factors and sub-factors below:

No	Evaluation factors and sub-factors	Maximum score
I	<b>Concept of the work and quality of the proposed methodology</b>	<b>40</b>
I.1	Understanding the requirements of the contract	2
<p><i>This sub-factor will assess the extent to which the description of the general concept for addressing the requirements of the tender specifications, presented in section A of the technical offer, demonstrates the contractor's understanding of the requirements of the contract. Understanding the requirements is key to designing a qualitative technical offer and developing deliverables that are useful to stakeholders.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (the general concept for the approach of the contract is presented in the technical offer, but is limited to rendering the requirements of the contract and does not add value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 0 pts.</li> <li>• Well (the general concept for the approach to the contract is described in the relevant technical offer and in line with the requirements of the contract, the technical offer has added value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 1 pt.</li> <li>• Very well (the general concept for the contract approach is described in the relevant technical offer and in line with the requirements of the contract, which are systematically analysed, taking into account the multinational specificity of the evaluated programme, the technical offer has significant added value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 2 pts.</li> </ul>		
I.2	Proposed manner to achieve the objectives	2
<p><i>This sub-factor will assess the extent to which the description of the achievement of the objectives presented in section A of the technical offer demonstrates result orientation.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (the way to achieve the objectives is presented in the technical offer, but the description of the achievement of the objectives is limited and does not add value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 0 pts.</li> <li>• Well (the way to achieve the objectives is analysed, the description of the achievement of the objectives shows elements of result orientation, the technical offer brings added value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 1 pt.</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very well (the way to achieve the objectives is analysed in detail, the description of the achievement of the objectives demonstrates result orientation, the technical offer brings significant added value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 2 pts.</li> </ul>		
1.3	Understanding the evaluation questions	9
<p><i>This sub-factor will assess the extent to which the outline of the evaluation questions, presented in section B of the technical offer, demonstrates understanding of the evaluation questions so as to obtain deliverables that are relevant, substantiated and useful to stakeholders.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (the evaluation questions are presented in the technical offer, but their analysis is limited and does not add value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 0 pts.</li> <li>• Well (the evaluation questions are systematically analysed, their analysis is relevant and includes elements related to the components and concepts covered, the technical offer brings added value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 4.5 pts.</li> <li>• Very well (the evaluation questions are systematically analysed, their analysis is relevant, it outlines the components and concepts covered and takes into account the specific multinational character of the evaluated programme, the technical offer brings significant added value to the content of the Terms of Reference): 9 pts.</li> </ul>		
1.4	Methodological approach to answering evaluation questions	18
<p><i>The application of this factor aims at the relevance of the information submitted by the tenderers in section B of the technical offer, in relation to the proposed methodologies, methods and/or tools for the contract activities. In order to obtain points, the technical offer must detail the minimum methodological approach required in the Terms of Reference.</i></p> <p><i>The use of triangulation (several methodological approaches converge towards the same result) supports the issuance of robust, reliable conclusions that answer the evaluation questions.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (the technical offer specifies the approaches, methods and tools chosen to achieve the expected results, but their description is not detailed and it does not add value to the content of the Terms of Reference, the proposed approach is not based on tested<sup>1</sup>, recognised<sup>2</sup> methodologies, methods and/or tools and/or shows a limited understanding of the context, with poor justification for the choice of methodology): 0 pts.</li> <li>• Well (the technical offer specifies the approaches, methods and tools chosen to achieve the expected results, describes for each evaluation question how to apply the approach and brings added value to the content of the tender specifications, the proposed approach is partly based on methodologies, methods and/or tools tested, recognised and/or demonstrating understanding of the context, respectively the specificity of the tasks set out in the Terms of Reference, justifying the choice of methodology): 9 pts.</li> <li>• Very well (the technical offer specifies the approaches, methods and tools chosen to</li> </ul>		

<sup>1</sup> Methodologies, methods and/or tools have been used in other projects.

<sup>2</sup> Methodologies, methods and/or tools described in the literature.

<p>achieve the expected results, describes for each evaluation question their application, the proposed approach is largely based on a number of methodologies, methods and/or tools tested, recognised and/or demonstrating a very good understanding of the context, respectively of the specific multinational character of the evaluated programme, with clear justification of the choice of methodology, the understanding of the programme starts from the theory of change or similar approaches, the proposed evaluation methodology brings significant added value to the content of the Terms of Reference and/or includes innovative elements (e.g. the use of advanced technologies) and/or additional proposals that contribute to improving the quality of the deliverables (e.g. interactive data visualisations): 18 pts.</p>		
1.5	Strategy for data collection and processing	9
<p><i>Data collection and processing are essential to implement the methodological approach previously proposed and evaluated.</i></p> <p><i>Data collection and processing provide information and data to substantiate the methodology. They are a defining part of the evaluation exercise. In this respect, the CA would like to ensure that the tenderer systematically analysed the data collection and processing needs in order to achieve qualitative deliverables that are useful in the decision-making process. Thus, this sub-factor will assess the extent to which the data collection and analysis sources and tools presented in section B of the technical offer are described in detail, are suitable, feasible, take into account the specificity of the contract and identify and address possible problems of unavailability of the necessary data.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (sources and tools for data collection and analysis are not described, are briefly described or are not suitable or feasible, possible issues related to data unavailability are not identified and addressed): 0 pts.,</li> <li>• Well (sources and tools for collecting and analysing quantitative data are described in detail, are suitable and feasible, possible issues related to data unavailability are identified): 4.5 pts.,</li> <li>• Very well (sources and tools for collecting and analysing quantitative data are described in detail, are suitable, feasible and take into account the specific multinational character of the programme evaluated, possible issues related to data unavailability are identified and addressed): 9 pts.</li> </ul>		
II	<b>Organisation and management of the work and quality control measures</b>	<b>30</b>
II.1	Organisation of the expert team by activities and tasks	5
<p><i>This sub-factor will assess whether the activities necessary to fulfil the contract, as presented in section C of the technical offer, have been correctly identified and whether clear tasks to be carried out by the experts proposed according to their expertise derive from these activities.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (the technical offer ambiguously summarizes/describes the organisation of the team of experts by activities and tasks): 0 pts.,</li> <li>• Well (the technical offer clearly and logically describes the organisation of the team by activities and tasks: the activities necessary for performing the contract are largely identified, tasks derive from these activities that are to be carried out by the</li> </ul>		

<p>proposed experts): 2.5 pts.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very well (the technical offer describes in a detailed, clear and logical way the organisation of the team by activities and tasks: the activities necessary for performing the contract are identified, clear tasks derive from these activities that are to be carried out by the experts proposed according to their expertise; the number of working days is correlated with the activities and tasks identified): 5 pts.</li> </ul>		
II.2	<p>Capitalising on the previous experience of the team of experts in the field of European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg</p>	7
<p><i>This sub-factor will assess the extent to which the previous experience of the team of experts in the field of European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg is used in the organisation and management of the activity, as presented in section C of the technical offer.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (the technical offer takes into account exclusively the previous experience in the field of European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg of the expert for whom in-depth knowledge of the field has been requested and who is involved in a limited number of individual activities, with no potential for knowledge-spreading): 0 pts.,</li> <li>• Well (the technical offer takes into account the previous experience in the field of European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg of the expert for whom in-depth knowledge of the field has been requested, who also carries out advisory/horizontal activities with the potential to spread knowledge and/or there is at least one other member of the team with previous experience in this field whose activities capitalize on this advantage): 3.5 pts.,</li> <li>• Very well (The technical offer takes into account the previous experience in the field of European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg of the expert for whom in-depth knowledge of the field has been requested, who carries out advisory/horizontal activities with a clear knowledge spill-over effect and/or there are at least two other team members with previous experience in this field whose activities capitalize on this advantage): 7 pts.</li> </ul>		
II.3	<p>Involvement of the key experts</p>	7
<p><i>Key experts play an essential role in the execution of the contract, as specified in the Terms of Reference. Therefore, they must be mentioned in the technical offer, both in terms of involvement in the project activities (number of working days) and in terms of the expertise provided (project expertise). Therefore, given their defining role in the execution of the contract, the CA expects them to represent an important part of the overall expert team effort. At the same time, key experts being already selected in the offer will reduce the risk of delays in contract implementation that would be otherwise caused by identifying suitable experts for carrying out the evaluation activities. Although this contract is of a global price type, in the sense that payments will be made per deliverable, without the approval by the Contracting Authority of the experts' time sheets, the development of a qualitative deliverable requires the use of adequate expertise, both qualitatively and quantitatively. From the second perspective, the tenderer must estimate, as part of Section C of the technical offer, the number of working days per type of expert and activity. Thus, for this sub-factor, the score is based on the share of the total number of working days allocated to key experts.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (Involvement of key experts is limited - The share of working days allocated to key experts is below 30%): 0 pts.,</li> <li>• Well (Involvement of key experts is good - The share of working days allocated to key experts is between 30 and 60%): 3.5 pts.,</li> <li>• Very well (Involvement of key experts is very good - The share of working days allocated to key experts is over 60%): 7 pts.</li> </ul>	
II.4	Time planning of the activities and content of deliverables	2
<p><i>This sub-factor will assess the extent to which the activities necessary to perform the contract, as set out in section C of the technical offer, have been correctly and coherently timed and the extent to which the content of the deliverables, as set out in section C of the technical offer, is properly described and in accordance with the schedule of activities.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (the activities required to perform the contract have been time-framed with deficiencies and/or the content of deliverables is ambiguous and not feasible given the proposed schedule of activities): 0 pts.,</li> <li>• Well (the activities necessary to perform the contract have been correctly time-framed and/or the content of the deliverables is coherent and feasible given the proposed schedule of activities): 1 pt.,</li> <li>• Very well (the activities necessary for performing the contract have been time-framed in a correct, clear and logical manner and the content of the deliverables is coherent and fully takes into account the expected results of the activities, given the proposed schedule of activities): 2 pts.</li> </ul>		
II.5	Approaches to ensure the quality of the evaluation	7
<p><i>This sub-factor will assess the control mechanism, presented in section D of the technical offer, in terms of the quality of the data collected, deliverables, compliance with visual/graphic requirements and the quality of the language used, ensuring continuity in the provision of services. The quality control measures must be described in the offer and must be specific to the activities.</i></p> <p>Technical offers will be scored as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor (tenderer briefly describes the control system to be applied): 0 pts.,</li> <li>• Well (the tenderer describes in detail the control mechanism regarding the quality of the data collected, the content and language of the deliverables, ensuring continuity in the provision of the services; this mechanism is appropriate and takes into account the quality check grid for deliverables attached to the Terms of Reference): 3.5 pts.,</li> <li>• Very well (the tenderer describes in detail the control mechanism regarding the quality of the data collected and their processing, the content and language of the deliverables, the compliance with the visual/graphic requirements, the aspects deriving from the multinational character of the programme evaluated and the activities under the contract, ensuring continuity in the provision of the services; this mechanism is appropriate, contains elements with high added value and takes into account the provisions of the quality check grid for deliverables attached to the Terms of Reference during the process of drafting the deliverables): 7 pts.</li> </ul>		
II.6	Analysis of possible challenges	2

*This sub-factor will assess the extent to which the analysis of possible challenges presented in section D of the technical offer proposes appropriate and feasible treatment measures leading to the smooth performance of the contract activities.*

*Analyzing possible challenges and addressing them is a factor that influences the proper performance of the contract and implicitly the successful achievement of the proposed results.*

Technical offers will be scored as follows:

- Poor (the technical offer summarizes possible challenges and their treatment): 0 pts.,
- Okay (the technical offer describes in detail possible challenges, including those mentioned in the Terms of Reference, their treatment is appropriate, the proposed approach is feasible): 1 pt.,
- Very well (the technical offer describes in detail any challenges, including those mentioned in the Terms of Reference, their treatment is appropriate, the proposed approach is feasible and takes into account the multinational character of the activities under the contract): 2 pts.

<b>III</b>	<b>Financial proposal excluding VAT</b>	<b>30</b>
------------	---	-----------

The score received for the evaluation factor on the financial proposal excluding VAT = (lowest price/offered price)\*30 pct.

The lowest price is considered the lowest price among the admissible and technically compliant offers. The offered price is the price of the evaluated offer.

Criterion: value of the financial proposal in RON excluding VAT.

Any arithmetic errors will be corrected according to the legislation in force.

### 6.3. The winning offer

The final score of the offer will be determined by calculating the sum of the scores received for each evaluation factor, calculated according to the calculation algorithm presented above.

The offer with the highest final score will be considered the winning offer.

## 7. Budget and payments

The maximum budget estimated for this contract is 303.600 RON VAT included, respectively 250.909,09 RON VAT excluded (60.000 euro at an exchange rate of 5,06 RON=1 euro).

Payments shall be made on the following terms:

- 25% of the final amount in the contract shall be paid after the inception report is approved;
- 35% of the final amount in the contract shall be paid after the interim activity report is approved, conditional on the electronic submission of draft reports that pass a first quality check;
- 40% of the final amount in the contract shall be paid after the final reports and all deliverables are approved.

For the first/third payments, the final digitally signed electronic versions and editable versions of the agreed inception report/final evaluation reports must be provided along

with the corresponding invoice. The invoice for the second payment shall only be issued after confirmation by the Contracting Authority.

Payments will only be made after the procedure for approving the payment of the invoices is finalised at the level of the Contracting Authority.

## **8. Confidentiality and intellectual property rights**

The Consultant is responsible for keeping the confidentiality of information and data gathered and processed during the implementation of this evaluation and for ensuring that each expert involved signs a declaration of confidentiality. To this purpose, the declarations on impartiality and objectivity also cover confidentiality. The signed declarations shall be submitted to the Contracting Authority.

Any information and data gathered under this contract may only be made public based on the written approval of the Contracting Authority.

Intellectual property rights for all working papers and materials produced under this contract shall be exclusively transferred to the Contracting Authority.

## **9. Processing of personal data**

### Notification on processing of personal data by MDPWA

Given the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 679/2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (GDPR), the following aspects are notified:

Personal data as: name, surname, address, ID number, information in the professional profile is collected and processed according to the requirements of the present Terms of Reference, in line with the applicable legal provisions.

MDPWA will process the personal data submitted in the offer in order to perform the technical and professional assessment of the offers according to the scope of the present public procurement procedure, in line with the applicable legal provisions and with your consent provided by including the personal data in the submitted offer. These data are not processed in any other scope than the ones provided in the current Terms of Reference. These data may be made available to other public authorities, when MDPWA is obliged by law to do so. In the process of assessing the offers, MDPWA does not transfer data to any other EU Member State or third country.

The rights in articles 15 to 21 of Regulation (EU) 679/2016, including the ‘right to be forgotten’ may be exercised by sending a notification to [romania-serbia@mdlpa.gov.ro](mailto:romania-serbia@mdlpa.gov.ro) or at our headquarters in Libertății Blvd. no. 14, Bucharest.

For any other information regarding the processing of your personal data by MDPWA please contact the Ministry’s data protection officer at [datepersonale@mdlpa.gov.ro](mailto:datepersonale@mdlpa.gov.ro) or at our headquarters in Libertății Blvd. no 16, North Lane, Bucharest.

Complaints on personal data processing may be addressed to the National Supervisory Authority for Personal Data Processing.

### Protection of personal data during contract implementation

All personal data collection, processing and storing performed under the contract shall comply with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 679/2016 and shall be performed within the scope of the contract.

## ANNEX I - Checklist for assessing the inception report

The present Inception Report Checklist is used for assessing the quality of inception report.

A checked box by a statement indicates that item is not problematic. Details are included below each statement

Checklist	Yes
<b>1. General quality statements</b>	
1.1. All provisions in the Terms of Reference and in the Technical Offer are addressed	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.2. All aspects agreed in the kick-off meeting are addressed	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.3. The approach for data collection is reasonable, feasible and likely to provide all information needed to answer the evaluation questions (particularly as regards data availability at beneficiary level)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.4. The ratio between desk research and fieldwork is adequate to provide the information needed to answer the evaluation questions	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.5. Statistical or other appropriate data analysis methods are proposed, whether the data are obtained from the national administrations or are generated by the consultant through surveys or by gaining access to administrative data	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.6. Fieldwork is described and research methods are appropriate - such as interviewing methods - online, telephone or face to face, interviews with stakeholders, focus groups; the proposed questionnaires include all the appropriate questions (balance between open and closed questions, impartiality, clarity, specificity etc.) and the forms/models proposed are appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.7. Identification of regions and projects for case studies is based on statistical or other appropriate analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.8. In case there is an association between economic operators, the coordination mechanism between the consortium members is established	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	
1.9. Quality control procedures for all deliverables are established	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Details: ...</i>	

## ANNEX II - Checklist for assessing the evaluation report

The present Evaluation Report Checklist was produced as part of the Guide for Drafting the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy in Romania.

1=Not addressed, 2=Partially addressed, 3=Fully addressed, NA=Not applicable

Checklist	1	2	3	NA
<b>1. Executive Summary</b>				
1.1. The programme/ IP/ SO/ theme evaluated is well described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2. Evaluation questions and purpose of the evaluation are presented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3. A brief description of methods and analytical strategy (if appropriate) is provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.4. A summary of main findings and policy implications or recommendations is included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.5. Length is adequate (in general no more than 10-12 pages, or around 10% of the report)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.6. Comments:				
<b>2. Introduction</b>				
2.1. The introduction helps the reader in approaching the report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2. An overview of the report and the description of report structure are available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3. Objectives and scope of the evaluation are clearly presented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4. The programme/ intervention to evaluate, its expected use and relevant users are specified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5. References of the evaluation to the Evaluation Plan and other possible decisions of the MC are included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6. Evaluation questions and how they have been identified (e.g. interviews, surveys, discussion with the MA, meetings with MC and the stakeholders, etc.) are clearly described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.7. Evaluation criteria included in the analysis are specified, as well as their relations with the evaluation questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.8. The target population of the programme/ IP/ SO (as relevant) and territorial areas covered by the intervention are clearly identified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.9. The main stakeholders of the evaluation are clearly identified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.10. Comments:				
<b>3. Background and context</b>				
3.1. A description of the programme/ IP/ SO/ theme being evaluated (its strategy in terms of economic and social cohesion, strategic importance in the OP, etc.) is included	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Checklist	1	2	3	NA
3.2. The cause-effect relations underlying the programme/intervention are explicitly presented (a ToC or other interpretative framework)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3. The implementation of the programme/ intervention is well described and allows to understand possible bottlenecks or difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4. The main interactions with other relevant European or national policies are identified and described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.5. A well-focused review of the related literature is available to identify what is already known (including aspects on previous and similar financing and lessons learned etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.6. Comments:				
<b>4. Methodology</b>				
4.1. Evaluation approach and its rationale are clearly described and fit the ToC and the evaluation questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2. Sources of information and data are adequately presented (e.g. primary or secondary data, sampling method, statistical error, questionnaires, timing of data collection, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3. Analytical techniques are well described and allow to understand the reliability of the results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4. The strategy of combining methods/approaches (if any) is justified and allows to answer the evaluation questions properly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.5. Possible limitations of the evaluation are specified (e.g. limitations related to methods, data sources, potential sources of bias etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.6. Comments:				
<b>5. Main findings</b>				
5.1. The methodology is correctly applied	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2. Details of analyses and findings are clearly and logically described	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3. Analyses and findings cover all main aspects as deriving from the cause-effect relationships identified with the help of the ToC or other interpretative framework used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4. Discussion of evaluation findings is objective and complete, including - where relevant - both negative and positive findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.5. Findings are supported by evidence and are consistent with methods and data used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.6. All evaluation questions are addressed, and an explanation is included for questions that could not be answered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.7. Findings with regard to the examined evaluation criteria and the evaluation questions are presented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.8. Unintended and unexpected results are discussed (if the case, applying to impact evaluations)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.9. Factors contributing to the success/failure of the programme /intervention are identified and discussed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.10. Comments:				
<b>6. Conclusions, lessons learned and emerging good practices</b>				

Checklist	1	2	3	NA
6.1. Answers to all evaluation questions and values of interventions/ themes in relation to the evaluation criteria are provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2. Conclusions are formulated by synthesizing the main findings into summary judgments of merit and worth (any limitations of the results should be also explained)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3. Conclusions are fair, impartial and consistent with the findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.4. Conclusions are clear, concise and their potential generalization (at the level of a larger target groups, in time or in the space) is clarified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.5. Conclusions reflect the analysis of horizontal or cross-cutting themes (including trans-territorial relationships in ETC, gender and environmental sustainability) conducted in the evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.6. Lessons learned, including context and applicability are included (if the case)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.7. Emerging best practices, including context and applicability are included (if the case)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.8. Comments:				
<b>7. Recommendations and policy implications</b>				
7.1. Recommendations logically follow from conclusions, lessons learned and good practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2. Recommendations indicate the action needed to improve the performance of the programme/intervention in a concise manner. Long sentences and paragraphs are avoided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.3. Recommendations are based on priority or importance (e.g. high, medium, low)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.4. Recommendations are sufficiently detailed (who is called upon to act, time frame for their implementation, costs and/or complexity, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.5. Recommendations were discussed and validated with implementers and stakeholders (if requested or useful)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.6. Comments:				
<b>8. Annexes and references</b>				
8.1. A suitable style or format is used consistently for all references	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.2. Annexes included useful information, that could not be detailed in the text and help to understand context or other aspects presented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.3. All annexes are referenced in the text and are included in the Annexes section, in the order they are referenced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.4. Data and information in the annexes are clearly presented and actually integrate the text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.5. Comments:				
<b>9. General considerations</b>				
9.1. The report is written clearly and set out logically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Checklist	1	2	3	NA
9.2. The report presents an independent point of view and is not influenced by any stakeholder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.3. Specialized concepts are used only when necessary and clearly described (when useful, a glossary is included)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.4. Cross-cutting issues such as: (i) gender; (ii) tripartite and social dialogue issues (iii) international labour standards, (iv) environmental sustainability and (v) medium and long- term effects of capacity development action are assessed (if requested)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.5. All data is disaggregated by sex, age, ethnic group or other relevant demographic categories, where feasible;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.6. Charts, tables and graphs are understandable and appropriately and consistently labelled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.7. The report addresses the demand of the commissioner/s and is useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.8. Comments:				