

Terms of Reference

Overall objectives: Evaluation of updated regulations, statutes and Country level Action Plans developed by the STAND consortium partners in WB region.

Location: Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania

Timing and Duration: to be completed by 30/12/2023

Date of Issue: 11/05/2023

Closing Date: 25/05/2023

International Experts who meet qualifications are invited to submit an updated CV and a cover letter outlining their previous experience and interest in presented call. The cover letter should include a financial offer for the assignment (lump sum) as well as expected availability for the assignment period. Documents should be sent by email to ibcm_vacancy@ibcmirovica.eu, putting in cc m.kerolli@ibcmirovica.eu specifying within the email's subject "Evaluation of policies and regulations of Western Balkan Universities ". Request for clarification on TOR should be sent in writing by email to ibcm_vacancy@ibcmirovica.eu putting in CC m.kerolli@ibcmirovica.eu.

Background/Project Information:

Higher education governance and its autonomy is strongly enhanced by the effective and convincing accountability, transparency and financial sustainability. Discussions on the university governance and autonomy throughout HEIs in Europe are coming as a response to diverse challenges at the different country's context. As a result, the need for gaining and enhancing public trust in higher education became manifest to develop appropriate forms of transparency and accountability of both public and private institutions. An initiative to form a consortium came as response to address these challenges through the project Strengthening university autonomy and increasing accountability and transparency of Western Balkans Universities /STAND project .

The concept entails investing in the strengthening the mechanisms that ensures the long-term sustainability of university autonomy, transparency and accountability. The project foresees cooperation between HEIs in the WB region, their respective ministries and program country partners and contributes to the increasing of professional capacities of HEI staff in partnering HEIs.

As structural project it will support reflecting on standards at EU partners and enhancing them at WB institutions through intensified regular academic and management exchange of good practice and sustainable networking between EU-WB partners.

A mix of bottom-up and top-down approach that will be used in the project, fosters the dialogue between universities and ministries, and thus enables the consortium to contribute more effectively to the project implementation and sustainability to strengthen the autonomy of Western Balkans higher education institutions. The project aims to reach up to 50,000 persons engaged in higher education and other related activities in Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro and abroad through its dissemination activities.

STAND project aims to improve the processes and mechanisms of university autonomy by increasing the management capacities, accountability and transparency of WB Universities to modernize HE system, through the changes on institutional and country levels, supported by the respective Ministries of Education and accreditation bodies. As structural project it will reflect on standards at EU partners and enhancing them at WB institutions through exchange of good practice and sustainable networking.

Specific Objectives of the project:

- O1. To enhance modernisation of governance in Western Balkans Universities through capacity building, experience exchange and upgraded infrastructure;
- O2. To create and adopt the university autonomy scorecard for Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro;
- O3. To improve the university autonomy through empowering national and university level regulations and structures;
- O4. To expand an effective cooperation between HEIs and the relevant ministries in improving the transparency, accountability and financial sustainability.
- O5. To establish of the Expert network on university autonomy.

Purpose of Assignment:

The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate the developed regulations and policies by the Consortium WB partners.

In particular WB partner universities aim to develop 3 country level actions plans on the Universities Autonomy in Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro, which are based on the assessment reports and scorecards on Universities Autonomy. The scorecard provides comparable data on university autonomy across borders, in this case compared data between, Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro, benchmarking WB HEIs to European counterparts. By providing information on the current state of university autonomy and governance reforms, the Scorecard allows a more successful benchmarking of national policies with regard to university autonomy as well as the exchange of good practice. The reports describe the state of university autonomy in organisational, financial, staffing and academic matters, and analyse data for all indicators part of the EUA Autonomy Scorecard. Reports provide realistic assessments of needs in the university governance area and will provide ground for the identification of adequate autonomy model for HEIs in partner countries.

Each of the three Action Plans attempts to help mapping the most important aspects of institutional autonomy for the direct benefit of higher education institutions in Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro. The document will serve as useful tool for prioritizing the autonomy dimensions that could be considered as the most important, suitable and relevant for partner countries and propose the key actions needed for the completion of the activities.

All the partners from partner countries have prepared or in process of the preparation of the set of updated regulations, statutes and other documents using previous experiences and the subjects that were already well-developed with the newly gained experience in the previous project phases, workshops and study visits. The documents will have to be evaluated by International experts.

Methodology:

It is foreseen that the experts will work closely with assigned Universities to evaluate developed documents and where the documents are not of adequate level work together with the Universities assigned working group on the development of action plans, regulations, statutes and other relevant documents.

Estimated Level of Effort:

The level of effort includes 30 working days, which should be distributed according to evaluated required efforts by the expert.

Expected Outcomes/Deliverables:

The Expert will provide the following deliverables:

1. Online working meetings/focus groups with STAND team and Ministries of Education.
2. Evaluation reports of the University developed regulations, statutes and other relevant to autonomy documents.

3. Assistance in developing regulations and action plans
4. Coordination with other experts hired by the project to evaluate Three action country level plans.
5. Evaluation reports of the country action plans.

Requirements of Experience and Qualifications for International Expert:

- a minimum qualification of a master's degree in Education Studies. A PhD qualification will be a distinct advantage
- a strong experience (from 7 to 10 years) in development of evaluation criteria and guidelines university management, HEI sector development
- excellent written and oral communication skills in English.
- knowledge of the higher education system in Western Balkans, external QA mechanisms and prior work experience in conducting evaluations