



## Terms of Reference

### **International Digitalization and Smart city consultant**

to assist **NALAS** – the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe

in the framework of

the **BACID III** project -  
Building Administrative Capacities of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova

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The project Building Administrative Capacities of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova – BACID III is supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with funds from the Austrian Development Cooperation



## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The BACID III Program - Building Administrative Capacities of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova, is co-funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, KDZ-Centre for Public Administration Research, ReSPA (Regional School for Public Administration) and NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe).

The main objective of BACID III is to improve good public governance in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova. BACID III activities focus on two elements of governance:

- Increasing the quality of public administration and public services with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF); and
- Decentralization and local autonomy as key elements of the “Western European Democracy Model” and guarantors for the provision of high-quality local services.

The main outcome of BACID III will be that the quality of public administration and public services are enforced and decentralization and local autonomy in the Western Balkans and Moldova strengthened. From this perspective it is expected that decentralization and local autonomy as key elements of the “Western European Democracy Model” and guarantors for the provision of high-quality local services in the Western Balkans and Moldova are strengthened through the work of NALAS.

NALAS – The Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe brings together 14 Local Government Associations (LGAs) from South-East Europe (SEE). NALAS promotes the process of decentralization in partnership with its member LGAs and in cooperation with central governments and international organizations, considering local self-government as a key issue in the current process of transition affecting the various countries in South-East Europe. NALAS initiates and carries out regional initiatives for its members and helps LGAs to become viable representatives of local authorities vis-à-vis their central government.

NALAS today is a broadly accepted stakeholder in the South-East Europe efforts to join the European Union. NALAS has been a recognized partner of European institutions and have close cooperation with DG NEAR, Committee of the Regions, Council of European Municipalities and Regions and Council of Europe. Due to challenging situation in the Region (antidemocratic developments, slow social and economic progress, demographic changes, interfering global politics, reluctance from EU and individual members, etc.) the European Integration process is slow and support of NALAS is still needed. Strengthening triangular partnership between NALAS, NALAS members and local/regional partners in exploring and utilizing corresponding EU funding opportunities is crucial for achieving sustainability and improvement of public services in the Region. Policy advocacy and institutional dialogue vis-à-vis EU institutions remains the most effective approach in proactive role of NALAS in development and implementation of EU policies towards the Region, specifically in area of EU integration process.

BACID III will contribute to the institutional sustainability of NALAS by strengthening its technical capacities in its core areas, in particular extending NALAS’ role in Digitalization to support the South-East European Local Governments. NALAS will also foster its role in digital transformation processes to advocate on the interests and needs of its members regarding EU digitalization programs following the Digital Agenda and EU Digital Strategy with the Digital Compass topics on enhanced digital infrastructure, building new IT skills and expertise, improved e-public services and enriched

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digital environment for business and economy. Project also encompasses the activity of implementation support of two pilot projects and further enhancement of local public services by using smart digitalization and innovative solutions.

## 2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

### 2.1. Scope and objectives

The overall objective of the assignment is the enhancement of the capacities of NALAS to ensure the continuation and sustainability of activities started with the initial BACID III Digitalisation Report<sup>1</sup> published in October 2023, taking into consideration the overall aim of the BACID project of capacity development of PA at local level in the area of digital transformation, digital transformation of LGs, digitalization of local public services in the Western Balkans and Moldova, and thereby to contributing to improving local public policies and services.

The specific objectives are the following:

- Support efforts of NALAS in aiding support the digital transformation of LGs in the Western Balkan and Moldova;
- Providing expertise and assistance in the development of the **extension of the Digitalization Study in the area of skills and competences**
- **Promotion of** knowledge transfer initiatives for **Local Digital Solutions** created in partnerships with Academia, SME, Startups and with EU experiences recognizing the importance of **embedding the Digital Innovation Hubs** and SME local ecosystems to support specialized digital transformation services, aligning needs of specific cities, regions in urban or rural areas
- Support the analysis and assessment of digital challenges for WB6 local governments and Moldova and elaborate on potentials to **enhance Cybersecurity and Digital Capacities** on local level ensuring the resilience of digital systems.

### 2.2. Results to be achieved with support of the expert

With the initial BACID III Digitalisation Report , institutional sustainability of NALAS is ensured and digital transformation of LG is strengthened by identifying current level of development, challenges, opportunities and legislative framework for smart city and digital transformation of local governments and by providing comprehensive knowledge management tools. This assignment is for consulting services to contribute to the advancement of the study focusing on digitalization on local level by promoting innovations, skills and competences upgrade, improved cybersecurity and tailored digital transformation services. The Consultant will contribute by providing expertise and assistance to the capacity development activities and experience exchange concerning smart local digitalization in the specific areas.

## 3. SCOPE OF THE WORK

### 3.1. General

The expert will contribute to carrying out the NALAS agenda in extending NALAS' role in Digitalization to support the South-East European Local Governments (LGs).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nalas.eu/digitaltransitionreport/>

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### 3.2. Specific Activities

The Consultant will work closely with the Digitalisation officer of NALAS. To guarantee that the differentiated needs and requirements of the Western Balkan countries and Moldova concerning local smart digitalization are properly recognized, each LGA (NALAS member) has nominated a local digitalization officer and representative from the capital city or front-runner local government in the area in the NALAS Digitalisation Working group coordinated by the Digitalisation officer of NALAS

The consultant's assignment intends to contribute to the extension of the Digitalization report that shall encompass the topics of skills and competences of local public administration in the following specific areas:

- Potentials and good practices in Development of a Digital Competence Framework tailored for Municipalities
- Importance of enhancement of Skills in the Cybersecurity Domain, addressing identified deficits at the Municipal level
- Exploration of knowledge transfer initiatives of eGov Campuses by examination of models of other EU regions and cities. Identification of knowledge transfer initiatives and opportunities for municipalities in Western Balkans 6 and Moldova.
- Potentials and resources on transfer of valuable experiences and knowledge, along with insights into courses within the EU, offered to Public Administration entities in the Western Balkans 6 and Moldova

The final report is expected to be harmonized with key EU strategic documents, programs, and opportunities.

Consultants are encouraged to concentrate on aligning with the following specified programs:

- Digital Europe Program <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/digital-europe-programme-opens-candidate-countries-montenegro-north-macedonia-albania-and-serbia>;  
<https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/100740>
  - European Digital Innovation Hubs DIGITAL Europe - EDIH Work Programme 2021-2023,
  - Cybersecurity, digital skills, Advanced Digital Skills, Cybersecurity Skills Academy  
<https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/100739>
  - AI Towards networked Local Digital Twins in the EU
- EU4Digital <https://eufordigital.eu/>, <https://eufordigital.eu/countries/republic-of-moldova/>
- new Growth Plan for the WB6 [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-presents-new-growth-plan-western-balkans-including-eu6-billion-grants-and-loans-2023-11-08\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-presents-new-growth-plan-western-balkans-including-eu6-billion-grants-and-loans-2023-11-08_en)

### 3.4. Deliverables

The deliverables will include:

A comprehensive report that provides insights and comprehensive knowledge, resources and practices from EU cities and local governments to ensure that all NALAS members have access to up-to-date information on existent opportunities, practices, programs and studies, enabling them to build capacities and skills of public administration and make informed decisions at a local level.

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Building upon the findings of the earlier report and acknowledging the detected skills gaps, the extended study will conduct a more in-depth examination of the following topics:

#### **Development of a Digital Competence Framework for Municipalities:**

- What the benefits are for municipalities by exploration of potentials and identification of good practices.
- Application of the EU framework to the context of Western Balkans 6 and Moldova
- Illustrative instances such as the EU fitness test online.
- Examination of successful cases to tailor the framework for municipal needs.

#### **Exploration of knowledge transfer initiatives**

- Recognizing of GovTech, EDIH and eGov Campuses and benefit opportunities for municipalities in Western Balkans 6 and Moldova
- Examination of models and practices from various regions and cities.
- Strategies to incorporate these initiatives into municipal digital transformation efforts.

#### **Enhancement of Skills in the Cybersecurity Domain:**

- In-depth analysis of the importance of improving cybersecurity measures at the municipal level.
- Addressing identified deficits in cybersecurity skills.
- Recommendations and best practices for municipalities to strengthen cybersecurity skills.

#### **Establishment of AI Campuses:**

- Showcase of successful AI courses within the EU.
- Transfer of valuable EU experiences and practices.
- Insights into AI courses within the EU that are accessible to Public Administration entities in Western Balkans 6 and Moldova.

The Consultant is expected to contribute to the official launch of the study as a speaker.

## 4. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

### 4.1. Location

This is a regional assignment covering the NALAS region of South-East Europe. The expert may work remotely and travel as needed within the region, on a need basis. Coordination with the NALAS Secretariat will be done through online tools and in person meetings.

### 4.2. Start date and period of implementation

The period of implementation of the contract is from 20.02.2023 to 31.05.2024. The maximum envisaged number of working days for the assignment is 14 days.

## 5. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EXPERT

### 5.1. Qualifications and skills

The expert shall possess the practical experience in the field and demonstrate the following skills and expertise:

- ✓ Education: University degree in a relevant field such as urban planning, engineering, computer science, or public policy or other relevant fields, following 5 years of relevant professional experience, OR 7 years of relevant professional experience
- ✓ In-depth knowledge in the field of digital transformation and smart cities
- ✓ In-depth knowledge on digital transformation practices and agendas of the EU and processes with candidate countries,
- ✓ Experience in strategic planning processes at local government level,
- ✓ Knowledge of EU funding and specifically Instrument for Pre-accession,
- ✓ Excellent skills in practical application surveying, report writing and knowledge management and training materials development
- ✓ Practical experience with developing and implementing EU funded projects is an asset,
- ✓ Previous cooperation with the EU institution is desirable,
- ✓ Demonstrated analytical and writing capacity,
- ✓ Training and facilitation, coaching and mentoring skills,
- ✓ Capability to write and communicate in English is a must,
- ✓ Computer literacy, ability to present information in an appealing format,
- ✓ Demonstrated ability and willingness to work with people of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, different gender, and diverse political views.

## 6. CONTRACTUAL PROVISIONS

The Expert shall be contracted by the Austrian Association of Cities, Vienna, as support to the NALAS Secretariat.

The tasks shall be performed in close cooperation and agreement with the NALAS Secretariat, while KDZ-Centre for Public Administration Research as implementing Austrian project partner of AACT is responsible for final approval of deliverables produced.

## 7. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The interested Experts shall submit the CV and requested daily fee not later than February 15, **16.30 CET** at: [info@nalas.eu](mailto:info@nalas.eu).

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The maximum level of fee foreseen for the assignment is 700 EUR per day including VAT. Total number of days shall not exceed 14.

Within the commitment to diversity and inclusion, qualified women are especially encouraged to submit an offer.

**Questions to the ToR:** Questions about the ToR shall be submitted to NALAS via e-mail [info@nalas.eu](mailto:info@nalas.eu)