



Funded by
the European Union

arise Action for Reducing
Inequalities in Education

TERMS OF REFERENCE

External Evaluator

RfP- ARISE-001

“Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education”
ARISE

I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This document provides the terms of reference for an external evaluation of the project “Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education” (ARISE), an EU funded project, which is currently being implemented by the Consortium of eight entities: Kosova Education Center - Kosovo (KEC XK), Network of Education Policy Centres - Croatia (NEPC HR), Sabancı University Egitim Reformu Girişimi - Turkey (ERI TR), Children Are the Future – Albania (CAF AL), Centre for Education Policy - Serbia (CEP RS), proMENTE social research – Bosnia and Herzegovina (proMENTE BH), Centre for Educational Initiatives Step by Step - Bosnia and Herzegovina (SbS BH), Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives “Step by Step” – North Macedonia (SbS MK).

The terms of reference (ToR) presented here offer a background overview of the ARISE project. Furthermore, they articulate the objectives and scope of the evaluation, including the evaluation questions, methodology, timeline of evaluation, as well as the qualifications and selection criteria for the evaluator.

II. SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education-ARISE is an EU Funded project, which is being implemented in seven Western Balkans countries and Turkey, from a consortium from eight entities mentioned above. The implementation period was 48 months, commencing on 9th of March 2020 to 8th of March 2024, therefore the evaluation will encompass the entire duration of the project.

The **overall objective** of the ARISE project is *to strengthen the capacities of CSOs for policy development and advocacy in the area of educational equity through regional cooperation and building national coalitions.*

The **specific objective** is *to support inclusion of students from low socio-economic status (SES) background by building national and regional partnerships of civil society organizations from six IPA beneficiary countries to engage in advocacy and constructive policy dialogue with governments, raise awareness among education stakeholders and pilot interventions targeting low SES students at school level.*

The project comprises five working packages (WPs), outlined as follows:

WP1. Policy analyses & research (led by CEP&ERI)

- i. Organise initial meeting of researchers from each partner organization to launch discussion on research methodology
- ii. Develop methodology to identify social mechanism and institutional effects related to inequality at national and regional level and map the policy analysis of the systems in place in 6 countries
- iii. Translate and adapt research instruments in 5 languages
- iv. Develop national reports and policy briefs for each of the six IPA Beneficiary countries in local languages

WP2. Policy outreach and advocacy (led by NEPC)

- i. Develop dissemination plan incl. website and social media pages
- ii. Issue call for grassroots organizations (one from each IPA beneficiary country)
- iii. Establish national coalitions of relevant stakeholders working on poverty and exclusion issues (one in each IPA beneficiary country)
- iv. Organise national events in each IPA beneficiary country to introduce the coalition and present the national report
- v. Organise the Regional Policy Lab with policy makers, policy analysts and practitioners
- vi. Organise five national coalition meeting and the final national conference in each IPA beneficiary country
- vii. Organise the final international conference

WP3. Consortium learning (led by Sbs BiH & Sbs MK)

- i. Support selected grassroots organizations to design and implement projects for low SES students
- ii. Organise a series of learning events for the Consortium
- iii. Design the school development programme

WP4. School interventions (led by KEC & CAF)

- i. Selection of 25 school (5 in each country – Turkey is not involved in this activity).
- ii. Inception training for school mentors
- iii. Inception training for school teams
- iv. Implement the school development programme including national peer learning events
- v. Conduct an impact study to analyse the effectiveness of the school programme

WP5. Project Management (led by KEC)

- i. Overall supervision and coordination of the project activities, incl. conflict resolution.
- ii. Financial management and supervision
- iii. Quality assurance
- iv. Technical and financial reporting
- v. The project has four results:

Results:

- 1) Social mechanisms and institutional effects related to inequality identified at national and regional level
- 2) Increased awareness among policy makers and educational stakeholders on the effect of SES on schooling and wellbeing of children
- 3) Local grassroots organizations empowered for advocacy and project design
- 4) Impact of poverty on school achievement and overall well-being of low SES students in 25 schools alleviated

III. EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this consultancy is to offer specialized knowledge and insight for conducting the external evaluation of the ARISE project. The evaluation is an end-of-project evaluation. This evaluation is designed to comprehensively assess the project in its entirety, aiming to provide a thorough understanding of its outcomes, impacts, successes, challenges, and overall effectiveness. The evaluation will encompass the entire duration of the project, spanning 48 months from its commencement on March 9, 2020.

A. Evaluation Objectives and scope

The objective of the evaluation is to appraise the sustainability, coherence, relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the ARISE project at both local and national levels across all consortium partners.

Evaluation of Implementation Strategies: To analyse the impact of the ARISE Project, by providing an assessment of the overall project progress and results against the objectives and indicators of achievement as mandated by the donor and stipulated in the project documents, with a higher focus on criteria of impact and sustainability.

Stakeholder Engagement and Participation: Evaluate the extent of stakeholder engagement and participation throughout the project lifecycle, including the involvement of local communities, governmental bodies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. Assess the impact of stakeholder collaboration on project outcomes and sustainability.

Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination: To understand the learning experience of the project by looking into how and why certain interventions have worked or not. This will include drafting lessons and recommendations.

Sustainability: Investigate the sustainability of project outcomes beyond the project duration, including the mechanisms put in place to ensure the continued impact and relevance of project interventions. Assess the project's sustainability planning and exit strategy, including measures taken to ensure the continuity of project outcomes beyond the funding period. This involves examining the establishment of sustainable mechanisms, partnerships, and institutional arrangements to support ongoing initiatives and sustain project impacts.

B. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation will assess the project against the OECD/DAC criteria, of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, Impact and sustainability. It will provide answers to the following evaluation questions:

Relevance: To what extent did the intervention align its actions and strategies with the identified needs and objectives, ensuring that the implemented initiatives were appropriate and effective?

Coherence: How effectively has the intervention aligned with existing frameworks, strategies, and contextual factors, ensuring a seamless fit and overall integration?

Effectiveness: To what extent have the intended objectives of the project been accomplished?

Efficiency: To what extent are resources effectively utilized within the project?

Impact: What measurable changes or outcomes have resulted from the intervention?

Sustainability: Will the positive impact last after the project has been completed (without further external support)?

C. Methodological Approach

The evaluation will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The Consultant will use a combination of surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and document review to gather relevant information. Methodologies shall include, but not limited to the following: 1) Desk review 2) Semi structured Interviews; Focus Group Discussions; Field visit; 3) Comparability of measures of achievements;

Desk review:

The evaluator will conduct an initial desk review at the onset of the contract, utilizing the materials provided by consortium members, as well as additional resources deemed pertinent to the subject. Specifically, the following documents will be assessed: Project documentation, including reports, visibility materials, monitoring and evaluation reports, and other relevant documents.

Interviews, focus groups, field visits:

The evaluator will apply various methods, including interviews, focus groups, or field visits. Additionally, interviews with Consortium Partners and Project Steering Committee (PSC) members will be conducted to gain insight into strategic decision-making, project oversight, and overall project management processes. Moreover, the evaluator will conduct interviews with beneficiaries, ensuring their voices and experiences are heard and incorporated into the evaluation process. These interviews may include a diverse range of stakeholders, such as pupils, teachers, parents, community members, and other relevant individuals impacted by the project. The evaluator may also identify and employ other suitable methods to ensure a comprehensive and insightful evaluation of the project.

Comparability of measures of achievement:

The evaluator will clearly define the project's intended objectives, which serve as the desired outcomes or goals to be achieved. Establishing specific and measurable indicators that reflect progress toward each objective. These indicators should be quantifiable, observable, and directly linked to the desired outcomes. The evaluation report should include a list of recommendations regarding the orientation and further development of the project, based on findings and lessons learnt.

D. Deliverables:

1. **Inception report / Detailed plan** – The evaluator is required to draft an inception report / detailed plan before commencing the comprehensive data collection process. This report will outline a well-organized evaluation plan, detailing the methodology to be working for addressing the evaluation questions. It will include proposed methods, sources, and data collection procedures. The inception report serves as an opportunity for both the project management and the evaluator to ensure a shared understanding of the evaluation and to address any potential misunderstandings.
2. **Draft Evaluation Report:** Deliver a draft Evaluation Report to the ARISE consortium for review, including the following components:
 - i. Executive Summary
 - ii. Introduction (*Description of the intervention, Purpose of the evaluation, Evaluation methodology, evaluation design etc.*).
 - iii. Findings (*Findings related to each evaluation question, overall conclusions and recommendations, additional findings*)
 - iv. Conclusions;
 - v. Recommendations;
 - vi. Lessons Learnt
 - vii. Annexes
3. **Final Evaluation Report:** Deliver the Final Evaluation Report

E. Evaluation locations and logistical arrangements

The evaluation will take place in the seven implementing countries: Kosovo, Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia and Turkey. The evaluator will be responsible to make their own arrangements for the field visits and appointments with relevant stakeholders. The lead partner of the consortium will provide all the information, and will support this process as well.

F. Timeframe and Work-Plan

The estimated duration of the contract is from **April 25, 2024 – June 6, 2024**.

Deliverables and other key-steps	Deadlines
Desk Review and Submission of inception report / detailed plan	06 th of May 2024
Field work- evaluation missions	07 th of May 2024- 24 th of May 2024
Submit the Draft evaluation Report	31 st of May 2024
Feedback from ARISE Consortium	4 th of June 2024
Submit the Final evaluation Report	6 th of June 2024

G. Financial offer

The evaluator should provide a financial offer, which contains the evaluator's remuneration and all expenses for the services described in this ToR, including travel, board and lodging, communication expenses and potential costs that might occurred during the evaluation process.

H. Qualifications

The applicants should have the following qualifications and competences:

- Bachelor's degree, preferably a Master's degree in social sciences;
- Proven record in leading evaluations in the context of international co-operation projects;
- Knowledge of, and experience in applying standard evaluation principles, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
- Experience in evaluation of projects funded by the European Union (EU), or other donors that use OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, standards, and principles for use;
- Ability to draft concise evaluation reports proficiently in English;
- Independence and absence of conflict of interests by not having been in any way involved in any stage of ARISE project, implementation, monitoring, etc.
- Availability to travel to the partner countries.

I. Submission of applications

Applicants shall submit the following documents, not later than 23rd of April 2024:

- **Curriculum Vitae:** Curriculum vitae (CV), including references to licences, certifications, accreditations, etc.
- **Cover letter:** A cover letter with a brief description of relevant previous experiences in evaluation and monitoring of projects;
- **Minimum 2 references:** Contact details of 2 references expected to support claims of knowledge, skills and experience;
- **Financial offer:** Financial offer as described in the article G.