

TOR for Short-term Consultancy

Support to economic diversification of rural areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)

Terms of Reference

Regional expert to support marketing and the promotion on social networks of regional value chain products from Drina-Tara, Drina-Sava and Krsh cross-border regions

1. Background

In September 2018 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development approved the realization of a 3-years regional programme with the title “**Support to economic diversification of rural areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)**”.

The project aims at strengthening the institutional capacities of selected stakeholders in Southeast Europe for supporting EU-compliant economic diversification in rural areas.

The renewed EU accession process is the main incentive for harmonisation and adaptation of the rural development policies and instruments of the six Southeast European countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) to the needs of their rural regions and the people living there. An explicit aim of the EU is to strengthen economic and social cohesion through its structural policy, its common agricultural policy (CAP) and their accompanying instruments.

The project contributes to improvement of the technical, methodological and implementation capacities for evidence-based rural development policies for economic diversification, facilities community-led area based development, as well as, value chain development.

The project contributes to the economic diversification of rural areas, thus positively affecting the life choices of the rural population, investing in sustainable business models.

The regional project includes all six Southeast European countries and the lead executing agencies are the ministries competent for agriculture and rural development, through their membership in the regional organisation Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (SWG RRD), which at the same time is the main implementing partner.

The three central project outputs are:

- 1) Regional cooperation and policy advice,
- 2) Sustainable business models, and
- 3) Community-led and area-based development strategies.

2. Specific Situation / Scope of assignment

The project strengthens the regional and national capacities in SEE states and the whole region through facilitating theme-specific policy dialogues and providing technical expertise on issues related to the economic diversification as a key strategy for rural development.

The project supports strengthening of the capacities of local and sub-regional stakeholders to support rural development in SEE. The capacities of public-private stakeholder networks (LAG/SHG) will be strengthened, in order to support development and implementation of community-led, LEADER and area-based development strategies and to sustainably secure their funding through national schemes and EU instruments for pre-accession assistance.

The target group of the project is the rural population in the selected project countries, especially in border areas, which is especially affected by poverty, due to the structural weakness of such areas as well as stakeholders (public, private and civil society) involved in the realisation of rural development policies and programmes. The SWG RRD has already established regional cooperation structures and networks in the seven cross-border regions *Sharra* (Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia), *Prespa* (Albania and North Macedonia), *Drina-Tara* (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), *Drina-Sava* (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia), *Krsh* (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Montenegro), *Prokletije-Bjeshket e Nemuna* (Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro), and *Pcinja-Krajshte* (Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Serbia) within the framework of an EU supported area-based development approach.

The project also aims to develop sustainable business models in structurally weak border regions. This includes improvement of the production and marketing of agricultural and wild products, local crafts and culinary traditions, digitalization, and sustainable tourism. The support is realized through capacity building and targeted investments for relevant key stakeholders from the private sector that will facilitate the cooperation and networking process.

The project addresses two value chains:

1. Traditional products:

Traditional products are an important part of culture, identity, and heritage. Local agro-food products are foods that people perceive to have some added value(s) because of its place of origin. Most of the selected cross-border regions are already famous for their typical dairy and meat products or processed non-wood forest plants, local crops, fruit and vegetables. The value chain aims to foster productive, commercial, and institutional relationships among small-holders, farmers, consumers, and their respective organizations, and its purpose is to develop /strengthen the value chain in the regional and domestic market. The grant scheme aims to provide more employment for rural population by making the small farming sustained through investments support in adding value through traditional processing. Adding value to agricultural production in rural areas offers tremendous potential to boost rural employment, incomes, reduce poverty and improve diversification.

2. Tourism:

The overall objective of rural tourism is to provide a sustainable source of local revenue to integrate and enable local communities to improve their living conditions through own means while contributing to the conservation of natural and cultural assets (biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage and traditional values). Rural tourism involves a range of activities and services offered by the population in rural areas. It is based on the principles of sustainability and a set of elements that contain the region's environment, natural resources, environmental values of local residents and traditional hospitality, culture & history. The primary beneficiaries of rural tourism are the local population, particularly the small-holders and farmers which profit from increased demand for local products and specialties.

One of the foreseen specific objectives for the development of value in products and services being offered in the Drina-Tara, Drina-Sava and Krsh cross-border regions is improving marketing and distribution channels for traditional products and tourism to the local, regional and international markets.

The objective of the assignment of the marketing expert is provision of regional technical support to the traditional products and tourism value chain participants and the SEDRA team in intensifying and professionalizing common marketing initiatives.

For accomplishment of the above-mentioned goals a consultancy contract is foreseen.

3. Tasks of the Consultant

To closely follow and accompany the marketing and promotional measures within the value chains in regions of Drina-Tara, Drina-Sava and Krsh i.e. to support, coordinate, plan and implement marketing promotional activities in close coordination with the SEDRA team.

Regional expert should have a solid understanding of how each social media channel works and how to optimize content so that it is engaging on those channels

In particular, the tasks of the assignment are as follows:

3.1. Perform initial assessment of the selected value chain participants

The purpose of the assessment is to help value chain operators to understand social media objectives and to set practical expectations when it comes to the role that this tool will potentially play in future operation of beneficially potentials. Also during the assessment Regional expert need to understand what individual goals of participants are and to understand some of the ways that social media can benefit their business.

3.2 Develop and deliver workshops

The VC operators in the cross-border regions often feel pressured to create social media accounts to keep up with the competition, or to target a different segment of consumers. Although social media is a great way to expand marketing reach and to connect with customers, it can create a lot of headaches, invite unwanted criticism, and become time consuming

During the training some of the topics which need to be presented

- How to create /modify business pages on Facebook and Instagram profile and YouTube;
- Present some of best practices in using Stories and Live Video on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube;
- How to interact with other social media users simple use of a few hashtags;;
- Present the good practices of the links between the account social media platforms with an existing website or blog
- How to make more friends on social media with others in the value chains or potential consumers;
- Getting more subscribers and favorites;
- Review some of already created Facebook business pages by participant of the initial assessment;
- Discussion with the VC operators regarding the individual decisions which platform(s) will be best their business.

On the initial assessment small group of interested VC operators should be selected who can devote additional resources and time to better promote their products on social media

3.2. Monitor distribution of content on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube);

- Generate, edit, publish and share content (original text, images, or videos) that builds meaningful connections and encourages VC operators to take action;
- In cooperation with selected VC operators create and finance at least 25 short social media campaigns .The minimum cost of those 25 campaigns should be at least 250 Euros;
- Set up and optimize selected pages within each platform to increase the visibility of rural products on social platforms;
- Continuously improve by capturing and analyzing the appropriate social data/metrics, insights and best practices, and then acting on the information;
- Facilitate the collaboration between selected VC operators and coordinate actions in
- Other advises Building & Maintaining local rural development brands.

3.3. Perform follow up workshops to evaluate the results achieved by using social media tools.

The Contractor might be required to perform additional tasks that are deemed necessary for the completion of the defined assignment.

All activities will be closely coordinated with the programme “Support to economic diversification of rural areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)” both GIZ and SWG RRD. Access to regional and local stakeholders, thematic networks and target groups will be assured by GIZ and SWG.

The working language for the assignment is English.

4. Reporting and Deliverables

The contractor will deliver:

- 4.1. Presentations and report from workshop/ initial workshop
- 4.2. Report with the results of at least twenty five social media campaigns
- 4.3. Final report with all activities implemented

The Contractor has to finalise and submit the deliverables in electronic version to the to the SWG Head Office/Secretariat, Mr. Boban Ilic, Secretary General and Ms. Andja Vukcevic Zoric, SWG Regional Coordinator.

5. Time and Place

The Consultant will be contracted for a period of 3 months.

The total number of working days is estimated up to 24 days, out of which up to 18 days are foreseen for desk work and 4 days are foreseen for field missions in the targeted regions (up to 2 travels).

All travel, accommodation, transportation and any additional costs occurring from the travel arrangements for participation on the field missions to the participating countries will be covered by the contracted party and should be accounted in the financial offer.

6. Minimum qualifications of the expert(s)

- At least high school education related to economy, marketing with relevant work experience ;
- Professional experiences in implementation of marketing activities, media and communications, social media/digital strategies;

- Proven working experience in social media marketing or as a digital media specialist
- Ability to work in a team;
- Experiences in preparation of various reports, documents;
- Knowledge and experience from the targeted regions;
- Knowledge of current trends in rural development with a special focus on rural tourism
- Existing knowledge of current trends of rural development / rural tourism in the Balkans would be an advantage.
- Existing networks in the targeted region and abroad relevant to the assignment would be an advantage.
- Extensive knowledge of English language, advanced writing and communication skills.