

Terms of Reference

Call for Expert: Assessment of communication activities

Title:	Call for Expert: Assessment of communication activities
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Project:	Fostering Evaluation Competencies in Research, Technology and Innovation in the SEE Region (EVAL-INNO)
Project Number:	SEE/B/0025/1.3/X
Work package:	WP2 communication activities
Related Task:	2.3 Monitoring and evaluation
Instrument:	South East Europe – Transnational Cooperation Programme
Project duration:	1 May 2011 – 30 April 2014

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1. Background Information and Rationale

The project “EVAL-INNO Fostering Evaluation Competencies in Research, Technology and Innovation in the SEE Region” is co-funded by the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme (2nd call). It is implemented from May 2011 – April 2014 and involves partners from six countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro and Serbia. For Montenegro and Serbia funding is provided from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). For all other participating countries funding comes from ERDF and national sources.

The upgrading of evaluation capacities for Research, Technology, Development and Innovation (RTDI) policies, programmes and institutions towards international state-of-the-art standards provided by EVAL-INNO will contribute to a more evidence-based decision making in RTDI policy and improve the framework conditions for the entire innovation systems. The geographical focus is the South East Europe (SEE) region with outreach to the West Balkan Countries (WBC).

In particular, the project aims to:

- Promote the role of RTDI evaluation as a crucial condition for a reflexive learning innovation system;
- Develop needed capacities and competencies for comprehensive RTDI evaluations;

- Provide procedural and methodological know-how and tool kits for evaluators and awarding authorities.

The impact of activities is improved design of innovation programmes and their governance.

2. Description of the Project Activities

The Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) from Austria is the Lead partner of the project and has dedicated experience with coordination activities linked to research and development on a global scale and particularly regarding East- and Southeast Europe.

The project consists of eight work packages under the supervision of different partners as work package leaders who implement the following activities of EVAL-INNO:

- Establishment of a regional RTDI evaluation platform including: Evaluators database; Repository of relevant strategic documents; RTDI programmes; existing RTDI infrastructures;
- Development and publication of RTDI evaluation standards in local languages;
- Analysis of the RTDI evaluation practice in the SEE region and definition of training needs;
- Organisation of training workshops for RTDI evaluators and awarding authorities for RTDI evaluations;
- Conducting pilot programme evaluations and benchmarking exercises to demonstrate good practice;
- Building transnational ownership and ensuring continuation of the platform.

A strong emphasis has to be put on dissemination and promotion activities to guarantee visibility and take up of project results by the addressed beneficiaries, mainly public authorities in charge of RTDI support instruments. The target region include the six partner countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro and Serbia) as well as other Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo*¹). A second target group of beneficiaries in the course of the project are potential evaluators of RTDI programmes, policies and infrastructures.

The external dimension of communication activities comprises dissemination and promotion actions; here the outreach to the target groups defined and the uptake of appropriate practice is essential for the project success. Overall, the functionality and user friendly shape of employed instruments for communication to external user groups is essential.

¹ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The project structure and work share among partners requires a well-structured and functioning internal communication to guarantee a smooth project implementation.

3. Evaluation motives and objectives

This evaluation aims to support the on-going communication activities about the added value of evaluation in RTDI in Southeast Europe, in particular in Western Balkan countries.

The evaluation will be most useful if it assesses the effectiveness and impact of implemented communication tools and activities (for details, please refer to envisaged time table). Furthermore, the evaluation should provide recommendations for improvements and possible innovations in our communications strategy in order to support:

- the internal communication process during the project duration
- the external communication process during the project duration and
- the external communication process with regard to envisaged activities within the WP8 (Promoting International Exchange and Sustainability) in particular regarding the sustainability of the established EVAL-INNO platform.

4. Task description and scope of the external expert

Communication activities are supported by a specific work package. A distinction is drawn between external communication activities, internal communication activities and the assessment of all communication activities.

In the first months EVAL-INNO has produced a communication plan consisting of tools that should be used during the implementation of the project (mailing lists, website, internal share-point, online tools, newsletters, brochures/leaflet). The communication plan includes all project activities where dissemination and communication activities are needed to reach the overall objective of the project. This plan sets the framework for systematic planning of all communication activities in the project. Updates of the communication plan are planned every six months.

All communication and dissemination activities are supported by monitoring and evaluation tasks that were started with a first assessment of internal communication in 2011.

The external expert will focus on the assessment of the internal and external communication process during the lifetime of the project and will give guidance for further improvements of these processes. This work should be carried out through systematic inquiries through online surveys and occasionally by supporting feedback inquiries to participants in workshops. Detailed description of the tasks required is provided below.

5. Required Outputs, deliverables and schedule

Overall, an external expert should assess the internal and external communication activities of the EVAL-INNO project and provide a list of practical recommendations in order to improve those activities.

The specific target group, their needs and background as well as the regional coverage of the project has to be taken into account.

Support will be provided from all partners in EVAL-INNO and in particular from the Lead partner, the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) in charge of the dissemination activities of the project.

Assessment of the internal communication activities

- A first questionnaire for the assessment of internal communication was developed and an online survey was conducted in November 2011. The questionnaire and the results of the survey are available and will be at the evaluator's disposal.
- A second and a third round of evaluation regarding the internal communication process must be organised in September 2012 and September 2013.
- Short reports (first and second interim reports) should give immediate response and propose corrective activities in order to improve the internal communication process (envisaged October/November 2012 and 2013).

Assessment of the external communication activities

- During the lifetime of the project and starting in September 2012, two independent evaluation loops have to be organised to assess the external communication aspects and outreach of EVAL-INNO to the general public and the specific target groups.
- The results of the first online survey focusing on the external communication activities and including recommendations have to be presented within the first interim report (envisaged October and November 2012).
- The second evaluation round has to take place in September/October 2013. This evaluation round should also cover the functionality and usability of the virtual infrastructure available on the website www.eval-inno.eu.
- The assessment of project activities with a dedicated outreach to the target groups in way of training activities or relevant workshops are supported by feedback tools (participant evaluation forms) which are already prepared by EVAL-INNO partners. Furthermore, training event reports will also be at the evaluator's disposal. In addition, face-to-face interviews with the participants (external communication) or relevant organisers (internal communication) may be conducted by an external evaluator. Here, the strong interaction with the relevant organisers of activities is requested.
- The second interim report should be envisaged for October/November 2013.

The evaluation should produce:

- **Detailed Evaluation Plan** (Methods are defined; resources to the evaluation process are assigned; findings of the 1st online survey focusing internal communication are used to pre-design 2nd and 3rd online survey as regards the internal communication)
- **First interim Report** (Findings of the 2nd online survey focusing on internal communication; Finding of the 1st online survey focusing on external communication; Analysis of the existing communication tools; First recommendations regarding internal and external communication activities and tools such as recommendation of further communication channels that might be useful for internal communication processes and could be supportive for external dissemination activities)
- **Second interim Report** (Findings of the 3rd online survey focusing on internal communication; Findings of the 2nd online survey focusing on external communication; Findings of the participant evaluation forms and training event reports; In addition – if further methodological tools are included, such as face-to-face interviews with the participants during the training activities (external communication) or relevant organisers (internal communication) – these findings should be included in this reporting; Additional recommendations regarding internal and external communication activities and tools)
- **Final Evaluation Report** (Review of results of the first and second interim report; Inclusion of final recommendations and lessons learnt; Comprehensive recommendations with regard to envisaged activities within the WP8 [Promoting International Exchange and Sustainability] in particular regarding the sustainability of the established EVAL-INNO platform.

The reports can employ e.g. SWOT analysis or other useful analytical tools and should give further guidance and practical recommendations how communication and dissemination activities could be streamlined to ensure high outreach and impact for the target groups of EVAL-INNO. The content and length of the reports has to be agreed with the communication WP leader.

Note that the external reporting process and communication to the JTS is not part of the analysis.

For the assessment a distinction of the expected use of project results by different target groups in different target countries would be useful, therefore **knowledge of the external expert about the specific country situations in the field of RTDI is essential.**

For the suggested tasks it is assumed that maximum 15 days might be required (as orientation).

6. Tentative time plan

The expert will be recruited by End of April 2012 and must be available until April 2014, the tentative schedule of activities is presented below.

Activities	2012												2013												2014					
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June			
Tendering	X																													
Contracting	X																													
Detailed Evaluation plan		X	X																											
Inception phase			X	X	X																									
Internal comm. – 2 nd online survey						X																								
External comm. – 1 st online survey						X																								
1 st interim report							X	X																						
Additional evaluation activities ²																														
Internal comm. – 3 rd online survey																	X													
External comm. – 2 nd online survey																	X													
2 nd interim report																		X	X											
Final report																						X	X							

² If added value is to be expected – an evaluator may propose additional methodological tools (such as further online questionnaires, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, focus-groups etc.).

7. Guiding principles and values

- The external expert must act independent from other assignments and positions held.
- The information received and gained through the systematic investigations have to be kept confidential and is the solely property of EVAL-INNO. It can not be distributed by any means through other communication channels to any other interested parties except the involved partners.
- The work of the external expert will be supported by all partners, the information requested from partners e.g. for filling in surveys should be clarified in advance with ZSI to avoid additional work for the partners involved.
- Any direct support to communication and dissemination by the external expert is appreciated (e.g. introduction to new modes of distribution not known to the partners yet etc.).
- The objective of the monitoring and evaluation of communication is to support the work of EVAL-INNO and is introduced as a learning opportunity for the involved partners but not as a performance appraisal. A comparison of the communication activities throughout the project lifetime is appreciated.
- The emphasis of the support work of the external expert should be put on practical recommendations for the improvement of internal and external communication and dissemination activities.

8. Professional qualifications and expert profile

- The external expert should have experience with the assessment of dissemination and communication activities in European funded projects. In addition, knowledge about funded projects from the Structural Funds and/or IPA would be an asset.
- For the assessment a distinction of the expected use of project results by different target groups in different target countries would be useful, therefore **knowledge of the external expert about the specific country situations in the field of RTDI is essential**.
- Excellent knowledge of English is compulsory; knowledge of a regional language from the SEE would be an advantage.
- The applicant must not be employed by one of the EVAL-INNO consortium partners!

9. Application

Applications for the external expert shall include the following documents:

- A CV highlighting relevant experience and reference projects/examples (min. 5; max. 10)
- An evaluation concept with a concise description of the activities and methods used
- A binding cost calculation indicating the number of days and the daily rate (all costs included)

10. Selection criteria

The external expert will be selected by the following criteria:

- 40% professional experience evidenced by the CV (including reference projects)
- 20% evaluation concept (content, methodologies used etc.)
- 40% days/price ratio

An international selection committee will be convened to select the external expert. The selection committee will consist of representatives of the partners involved in EVAL-INNO.

11. Submission of application

- Please submit the required documents for application as external expert per e-mail to: Ms. Ines Marinkovic: marinkovic@zsi.at
- Deadline for the submission of an application is **April 20, 2012** (date of entry of the e-mail). Any application received after the deadline will not be considered.
- The contractor reserves the right not to place any order.
- Costs for necessary document preparation by the applicant to this call will not be reimbursed. This call is not subject to the conditions of the Austrian Public Procurement Law.

12. Contracting Procedure and Budget

The selected expert will be informed on the results of the selection procedure by End of April 2012. The contract with the selected expert will be established by ZSI (Centre for Social Innovation) as representative of the EVAL-INNO project, shortly after the selection. As indicated above, the duration of the contract will be from mid May 2012 to April 2014.