ANNEX II: TERMS OF REFERENCE

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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Partner country

< Albania >

### Contracting authority

< Municipality of Gjirokaster >

### Country background

The Municipality of Gjirokastra (the Biggest Municipality of the Region) is principally the commercial centre with specific productive activities. The most notable one is related to agriculture. The Municipality of Gjirokastra is a regional agricultural market that trades locally produced groceries, aiming to export the products to other regions. Given the potential of southern Albania to supply organically grown products, and its relationship with Greek counterparts in the nearby city of Ioannina, it is a sign that the agrofood market is one of the most promising developing sectors of the region.

Soil degradation is a significant problem worldwide and is a cause for alarm, as it is an essential ecosystem related to food production, energy, carbon sequestration, water purification, and nutrient regulation. When soil degrades, it causes a decline in soil health, biodiversity, and productivity. This leads to issues at all levels of many ecosystems and significant environmental consequences such as floods and mass migration. Soil degradation is a cause for alarm, as it is an essential ecosystem related to food production, energy, carbon sequestration, water purification, and nutrient regulation.

By implementing sustainable soil management practices, the ECOBASE project helps to reduce soil erosion, prevent contamination of water bodies, and preserve natural habitats, leading to cleaner and healthier environments for the general public to enjoy. Also, the project's emphasis on sustainable agriculture and soil health directly impacts the quality and safety of food produced in the ADRION Region. This leads to healthier and safer food products reaching the market, benefiting the general public's nutritional well-being and reducing potential health risks associated with food contamination. The outputs of the project (training, soil remediation methodology, integration of innovative technologies, and continuous monitoring of soil quality) will directly benefit land operation stakeholders, promoting long-term, sustainable regional development and competitiveness, offering a significant impact on the economy, society, and environment of selected areas; increasing business opportunities; securing environmental sustainability & biodiversity; improving soil health; cleaning up pollution, and finally improving current techniques and preventing future contamination. The ECOBASE project is an absolute novelty for sustainable soil management within the broader EUSAIR strategy in the ADRION region and a preliminary step toward the future development of multiannual soil management plans.

### Current situation in the sector

**Soil degradation** shows a worrying trend in the ADRION region, mostly driven by the tourism sector. According to recent research, most of the ADRION coastline will be radically different by 2050. This phenomenon will severely hit countries such as Albania, which, considering the rather short coastline will have major problems.

**Protection and preservation of ADRION Biodiversity**: Biodiversity in the Adriatic-Ionian region is undoubtedly one of its greatest economic resources with a lot of potential as participating countries count it in their relative GDP generated. Nonetheless, biodiversity is seriously at risk, to the point of no return, due to extensive agricultural practices threatening the safeguard of traditional production, and seasonal mass tourism, further exacerbated by the consequences of climate change.

**Methodologies and solutions Harmonized with EU legislation**: So, the problems are well known and what ADRION area needs are methodologies and strategic solutions to be adopted, applied, and monitored.

### Related programmes and other donor activities

< N/A >

# OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

### Overall objective

The main objectives of the ECOBASE project are the joint development of methods and strategic solutions harmonized with EU legislation to manage and improve soil health, reduce environmental pollution, and improve the protection and preservation of ADRION Region biodiversity. The second main objective is to provide innovative tools to help policymakers and farmers better understand and assess soil degradation's economic risks and social and ecological impacts and evaluate and implement different mitigation strategies/methodologies.

### Specific objective(s)

The specific objectives (Outcomes) of this contract are as follows:

* Create 1x transnational network with at least 10 stakeholders supporting biodiversity protection,
* Provide joint developments of a methodology, an action plan & an innovative tool helping users assess economic, social & ecological impacts/risks and evaluate/implement different mitigation strategies,
* perform a joint action devoted to providing knowledge and sharing innovative technological tools,
* Establish a living lab to co-create knowledge and test/demonstrate in real-life conditions.

### Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor

1. Event organization for a project Meeting in Gjirokastra
2. Event organization for info Days / workshsops
3. Event organization for Capacity Building Activities
4. Content creation of promotional materials (Brochures, Posters & Flyers, press releases)
5. Monitoring and Evaluating Pilot Action
6. Internal Quality Plan& Evaluation Report
7. A report presenting agricultural challenges and opportunities specific for the region of Gjirokastra, contributing to the development of tailored strategies, activities, and interventions that address the region's unique biodiversity needs.

# ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

### Assumptions underlying the project

The main assumptions underlying the project are the following:

* The maturity of the project activities is at satisfactory level. Sufficient capacity of the involved stakeholders and target groups to participate in the project events/activities.
* Previous studies including norms, planning rules, financial and economic incentives, methods of analysis and evaluation of Agriculture sector in the Glirokaster Region and in country level will be available.
* The proposed strategic road map will be in line with the needs of the stakeholders involved and political support will facilitate the integration of this in the concerned areas.

### Risks

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **Weight** | **Probability of occurrence** | **Mitigation measure** |
| Inability to elaborate the necessary communication means as requested in by the Contract. | High | Low | The contractor is requested to have experience in EU projects. |
| Low capacity of the region and the country to implement the proposed measures-activities. | High | Low | Strong political commitment is in place to meet the sustainable development requirements and impose the necessary measures. |
| Convid19 – New lock Down | High | Medium | A risk assessment plan will be developed, and alternative solutions will be proposed (webinars) for the implementation of the project’s workshops. |
| Low capacity of the involved stakeholders and target groups to participate in the project activities / events. | Medium | Medium | The invitation approach / the communication channels and the agenda of the events will be redesigned. New dates will be chosen, if necessary, to address the requirements of most stakeholders. |
| Possible delays in project implementation | Medium | Medium | The project timetable will be re-designed, if necessary. A prolongation request will be submitted in case of major delays. |

# SCOPE OF THE WORK

### General

### Description of the assignment

The scope of the assignment is to provide integrated consulting support to the Contracting Authority for the implementation of the project deliverables listed in section 4.2.

### Geographical area to be covered

Albania, Municipality of Gjirokaster

### Target groups

* Local public authorities
* Regional public authorities
* General public
* Sectoral agencies
* Higher education & research
* Business support organisations
* Enterprises & SMEs

### Specific work

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Del. Num.** | **Deliverable Title** | **Description** | **Delivery date** | **Budget (€)** |
| M1 | Project Meeting | The contractor will organize a project Meeting in Gjirokastra. | Up to  8/2027 | 2,000 |
| M2 | Quality Plan & Evaluation Report | Elaboration of a quality plan and a constant evaluation report connected with the progress reports. | Up to  8/2027 | 17,000 |
| D.2.3.1a | Info Day & Workshop | The contractor will organize 2 events: An info day to inform users / farmers how to use free kits and how to collect and send data to the platforms and a training workshop/seminar about correct soil sampling. | Up to  8/2026 | 4,000 |
| D.2.3.1b | Capacity Building events | The contractor will organize 2 capacity building events to enhance the knowledge and skills of stakeholders involved in soil health management. | Up to  8/2026 | 7,000 |
| D 2.5.2 | Monitoring and Evaluation report for pilot | The contractor will elaborate a report detailing the selection and implementation of pilot actions, showcasing best practices and innovative approaches to soil health management. Highlight the tangible benefits and outcomes achieved in specific locations within the ADRION Region. | Up to  8/2026 | 4,000 |
| D.3.1.1 | Contribution to Soil health management strategy document | A report presenting agricultural challenges and opportunities specific for the region of Gjirokastra, contributing to the development of tailored strategies, activities, and interventions that address the region's unique biodiversity needs. | Up to  8/2027 | 6,000 |
| D.3.1.2 | Contribution at building the project knowledge | 6,000 |
| D.3.3.2 | Contribution to the development of Project Transferability Plan | 5,000 |
| D.3.4.1 | Communication material | The contractor will create the content and the promotional material: 400 Brochures, 200 posters & flyers, 6 press releases. | Up to  8/2027 | 3,500 |
| **Total** | | | | **54,500€** |

### Project management

### Responsible body

Municipality of Gjirokaster

### Management structure

The Municipality of Gjirokaster as a local public authority is interested in implementing activities and initiatives fostering sustainable economic and social development in its territory. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development is also priority for the Municipality of Gjirokaster and can be achieved though the elaboration and implementation of local strategies policies. Moreover, it has the capacity in networking with all the stakeholders on local, regional, national and international level in order to effectively achieve its goals.

Regarding EU-funded interregional project management, the Mayor of Gjirokaster is given by law the authority to sign contracts, initiate procurements procedures, cooperate with third parties and take key actions on the best interest of the municipality. He can delegate other aspects of the project management to the deputy mayors or other staff members. The Project Management Unit is composed by the Project Manager who has operational responsibility for the implementation of the overall project and will ensure timely commencement of the entire project within the time schedule. The Financial Manager has the responsibility to enable efficient overall financial and budgetary management of the operation. The Communication Manager has the responsibility to communicate internally and externally all-important aspect of the project. The Project Management Team is composed by experienced staff members of the Municipality and reports and informs the mayor periodically throughout the implementation of the project.

The Department "EU Projects and Programmes" will be responsible for the preparation and execution of the project activities.

### Facilities to be provided by the contracting authority and/or other parties

N/A

# LOGISTICS AND TIMING

### Location

Municipality of Gjirokaster, Albania

### Start date & period of implementation of tasks

The intended start date is <07.04.2025> and the period of implementation of the contract will be <28> months (project end is **31/8/2027**) from this date and including the closure phase. Please see Articles 19.1 and 19.2 of the special conditions for the actual start date and period of implementation.

# REQUIREMENTS

### Staff

Note that civil servants and other staff of the public administration of the partner country, or of international/regional organisations based in the country, shall only be approved to work as experts if well justified. The justification should be submitted with the tender and shall include information on the added value the expert will bring as well as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

### Key experts

Key experts are not required

### Other experts, support staff & backstopping

CVs for experts other than the key experts should not be submitted in the tender but the tenderer will have to demonstrate in their offer that they have access to experts with the required profiles. The contractor shall select and hire other experts as required according to the needs. The selection procedures used by the contractor to select these other experts shall be transparent, and shall be based on pre-defined criteria, including professional qualifications, language skills and work experience.

The costs for backstopping and support staff, as needed, are considered to be included in the tenderer's financial offer.

### Office accommodation

: Office accommodation for each expert working on the contract is to be provided by the contractor.

### Facilities to be provided by the contractor

The contractor shall ensure that experts are adequately supported and equipped. In particular it must ensure that there is sufficient administrative, secretarial and interpreting provision to enable experts to concentrate on their primary responsibilities. It must also transfer funds as necessary to support their work under the contract and to ensure that its employees are paid regularly and in a timely fashion.

### Equipment

**No** equipment is to be purchased on behalf of the contracting authority / partner country as part of this service contract or transferred to the contracting authority / partner country at the end of this contract. Any equipment related to this contract which is to be acquired by the partner country must be purchased by means of a separate supply tender procedure.

# REPORTS

### Reporting requirements

The contractor will submit the following reports in <English> in one original and one copy:

* **Inception Report** of maximum 12 pages to be produced after one month from the start of implementation. In the report the contractor shall describe e.g. initial findings, progress in collecting data, any difficulties encountered or expected in addition to the work programme and staff travel. The contractor should proceed with his/her work unless the contracting authority sends comments on the inception report.
* **Draft final report** of maximum <20> pages (main text, excluding annexes). This report shall be submitted no later than one month before the end of the period of implementation of tasks.
* **Final report** with the same specifications as the draft final report, incorporating any comments received from the parties on the draft report. The deadline for sending the final report is 15 days after receipt of comments on the draft final report. The report shall contain a sufficiently detailed description of the different options to support an informed decision on CCI sector. The detailed analyses underpinning the recommendations will be presented in annexes to the main report. The final report must be provided along with the corresponding invoice.

### Submission and approval of reports

The report referred to above must be submitted to the project manager identified in the contract. The project manager is responsible for approving the reports.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### Definition of indicators

< Specific performance measures chosen because they provide valid, useful, practical and comparable measures of progress towards achieving expected results. Can be quantitative: measures of quantity, including statistical statements; or qualitative: judgements and perception derived from subjective analysis. >

### Special requirements

< No special requirements are envisaged.>