



Sustainable Higher
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TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Mid-Term Evaluation

Project: “Sustainable Higher Education and Research in Kosovo (SHER)”

Country: Kosovo

Project Number: OEZA 8161-00-2024

Project Consortium consisting of: World University Service (WUS) Austria (lead), Zentrum für Soziale Innovation GmbH (ZSI), OeAD-GmbH Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation

Budget: EUR 2.750.000 (EUR 2.475.000 Austrian Development Cooperation/ EUR 275.000 Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Kosovo)

Duration: 1/6/2024 – 31/5/2027

1) Context and Background

The programme **SHER - Sustainable Higher Education and Research in Kosovo** aims at contributing to a sustainable, evidence-based, needs-oriented and gender-responsive Higher Education and Research sector in Kosovo that is in line with the principles of EHEA, ERA, and SDG 4 and 9. The sustainable benefits for the target group towards the defined objective are described through the following Outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Strengthened and more sustainable policies and legal framework for HE that facilitates inclusive and equitable quality education, fosters research & innovation, internationalisation and employability, and promotes gender equality and the 3rd mission of universities.
- **Outcome 2:** is specifically targeting HEIs: Enhanced good governance and provision of inclusive and equitable quality education at HEIs that is labour-market relevant, promotes research, innovation and internationalisation, and fosters gender equality and the 3rd mission of universities. Under this outcome, the programme will focus on the development, revision, and implementation of HEIs strategic documents and regulations.



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The **beneficiaries** of the project are the Ministry for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) as the main responsible institution for education and research in Kosovo, the Government Strategic Planning Office, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Kosovo as well as research organizations, individual academic staff (PhD and PostDoc staff) and students including from underrepresented groups.

SHER aims to reach the **following outputs**:

- **At the Policy level**, enhanced skills and competences of MESTI staff in charge of Higher Education (HE) and Research for effectively developing and implementing policies and laws along European standards in HE and research including performance-based funding (in line with specific objective 4.4. of KES). Enhanced skills and competences of KAA staff in addressing the requirements for regaining full membership in ENQA and EQAR (in line with specific objective 4.4. of KES).
- **At the University level**, capacities are developed for enhanced good governance, labour-market relevant education and the promotion of the 3rd mission at Kosovo's public universities (in line with specific objective 4.2. of KES). Capacities developed for the implementation of performance-based funding and internal quality assurance systems (in line with specific objective 4.2. of KES).
- **At the Research level**, capacities are developed for enhanced quality of teaching, research & innovation, implementation of the National Research Programme and the internationalisation/Europeanisation of its HE and research system.

2) Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this evaluation is to contribute to the accountability towards stakeholders as well as to provide evidence for institutional development and learning. As such, it will also provide recommendations for the remainder of the project implementation and assess the overall situation and the remaining needs for further support in higher education.

In this regard the evaluation is about **learning** and **accountability**: **Learning** for the consortium and the donors that will benefit from the **lessons learnt** and **recommendations** in the remaining implementation period of the project as well as in identifying the remaining needs. **Accountability** towards the donors, i.e. the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Kosovan Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI).

The main objective of the evaluation is to assess and present results, to provide conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations for the remaining project duration and identification of



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the remaining needs potential for a possible follow-up as well as its design and focus, in order to sustain the outcomes and outputs so far and to further contribute to the well-functioning of Higher Education and Research in Kosovo along the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA) in the future..

The evaluation is going to be carried out after 1,5 years of project implementation, because this is a good timing in order to evaluate the project progress, identify concrete results, stipulate improvements until project end as well as to look beyond the project lifetime.

The direct users of this evaluation are the members of the implementing consortium (WUS Austria, ZSI and OeAD) and the donors (ADA and MESTI). Indirectly all stakeholders should benefit from the findings of the evaluation.

3) Scope

The subject of the evaluation is the mid-term evaluation of the project “Sustainable Higher Education and Research in Kosovo (SHER)” (OEZA 8161-00-2024) in accordance with the contract.

As stated above, the evaluation of the project is analysing the intermediate effects and efficiency as well as sustainability and impact at the time the evaluation takes place. In this regard the following **OECD DAC evaluation criteria** will be used: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Area of Coverage:

The evaluation will cover **Kosovo**. Besides the capital Prishtina it will be necessary to visit the following university towns once: Peja, Prizren, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Gjakova and South Mitrovica.

The evaluation process should involve **all key project stakeholders**: the main direct beneficiaries as listed in section 1) Background as well as the involved Austrian institutions (consortium members and ADA). Additionally, other actors and donors in the field of higher education and research in Kosovo should be consulted. The project consortium will assist the evaluators in identifying relevant contact persons in these institutions.

4) Evaluation Questions

Under the relevant OECD DAC evaluation criteria, the evaluation team has to analyse the following points and evaluation questions outlined further below:



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- a) The extent to which the project has already achieved its outcome and outputs or is likely to achieve them, including the extent to which the supported institutions have already benefited.
- b) Strengths and areas of improvement in terms of planning, management, implementation and monitoring.
- c) The extent to which cross-cutting issues (gender, principles outlined in the Social Standard Assessment) were applied.
- d) Special focus should be put on sustainability of results including the institutionalization. Finally, and as indicated above, an assessment of the current status in Higher Education should be done in order to identify the need for potential further interventions which are to be endorsed by ADA management.

Relevance

- To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid for the partner country, its stakeholders and beneficiaries?
- Is the project still corresponding to the priorities and policies of the beneficiaries? Is the project in line with the latest developments in the EHEA and the relevant SDGs?

Effectiveness

- To what extent has the project already achieved its outcome and output(s) or will be likely to achieve it/them?
- Did the project contribute to capacity development as planned?
- To what extent was gender mainstreaming included in the project and to what extent were recommendations from the ADA gender-assessment considered and implemented?
- To what extent were the social standards monitored? Have any issues emerged, if so which ones and why?

Efficiency

- Was the project implemented in the most efficient way (time, personnel resources, budget)? Have any issues emerged, if so which ones and why?



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- How well does the cooperation work between the consortium, the local team, the beneficiaries and donors (e.g. work flows, division of labour, participation and local ownership)?

Sustainability

- To what extent has local ownership been developed?
- To what extent are the benefits of the project expected to continue after the end of the project?

Questions concerning follow up:

The following questions form the basis for concrete and practical recommendations for a continuation of an ADC engagement in the field of higher education and research after the end of the SHER project.

- Based on the evaluation of the project along the OECD DAC criteria and the specific evaluation questions listed above, what could be the focus and outputs of a follow-up phase/project?
- Are there follow-up measures needed in order to further sustain the SHER outputs?
- Are there outputs/activities in SHER to be followed-up, phased out or even further expanded?
- What are the current gaps in higher education and research that could/should be tackled in a follow-up project in order to further contribute to the well-functioning of Higher Education and Research in Kosovo along the principles of the EHEA and the ERA taking into account national policies and other international interventions/projects?
- What are the upcoming trends and developments in higher education and research, and the emerging needs of the MESTI, KAA and public universities (and possible other stakeholders/beneficiaries) that could/should be followed up?

5) Design and Approach

The evaluation itself consists of several phases:

Contract and Kick-off meeting: Contract is signed, and a discussion of the assignment takes place. First set of documents, including available data, are provided to the evaluation team.

Desk Study: The evaluation team studies all necessary project documents; re-construct and analyse the intervention logic and its assumptions. Existing data needs to be analysed and interpreted.

Inception-Phase: In the inception report the evaluators will describe the design of the evaluation and will elaborate on how data will be obtained and analysed. The use of a data collection planning worksheet or a similar tool is required. First set of interviews take place. Data triangulation and quality control are very important and need to be discussed in the inception report.

The field trip will only take place upon official approval of the inception report by the contractor and the ADA.

Field-phase: Data needs to be gathered, analysed and interpreted. It is expected that the evaluation will include quantitative and qualitative data disaggregated by sex.

Presentation: Presentation of key findings (feedback workshop) at the end of the field trip.

Draft Report: Submission and presentation of draft report, inclusion of comments from partners and contractor: Evaluator(s) shall either incorporate the feedback or briefly explain, why they have not (fully) incorporated feedback.

Final Report: Submission of final report, see reporting requirements under point 9).

For the different phases it is expected that data and information will be obtained through different qualitative and quantitative methods such as: analysis of documents, semi-structured interviews, semi-structured interviews face-to face or by phone, focus group discussions, others.

Sex-disaggregated data (qualitative and quantitative) shall be collected, analysed, and reported whenever feasible and useful.

It is expected that the evaluation team will present concrete recommendations which are addressed to the specific stakeholders, including the SHER consortium.



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It is currently estimated that approx. 30 - 40 people need to be interviewed.

Reporting

The evaluators need to submit the following reports:

- an inception report (10-15 pages without annexes),
- a final draft evaluation report (about 25-30 pages without annexes), including a draft executive summary and the results-assessment form (part of the reporting requirement) and a recommendations matrix (with addressees, priority, timeline to facilitate use),
- and the final evaluation report (25-30 pages without annexes), including the final executive summary and the results-assessment form (part of the reporting requirement) and a final recommendations matrix (with addressees, priority, timeline to facilitate use).

All reports need to be written in English. They need to be structured in line with the requirements set in the ADA Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations (2020)¹.

The executive summary should summarize key findings and recommendations (three to five pages) and needs to be submitted as part of the final draft report.

The findings and recommendations of the draft final report and final report have to be structured according to the evaluation questions. An outline of the report's structure needs to be agreed upon with the contractor during the inception phase.

The quality of the reports will be judged according to the following criteria:

- Are the results assessment form and the evaluation matrix part of the report?
- Does the report contain a comprehensive and clear executive summary?
- Were the Terms of Reference fulfilled and is this reflected in the report?
- Is the report structured according to the OECD/DAC criteria?
- Are all evaluation questions answered?
- Are the methods and processes of the evaluation sufficiently documented in the evaluation report?
- Does the report describe and assess the intervention logic (logframe) and present/analyse a theory of change and its underlying assumptions?
- Are cross-cutting issues analyzed in the report?
- Are the conclusions and recommendations based on findings and are they clearly stated in the report?
- Does the report clearly differentiate between conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations?

¹ See in particular Annex and 5 and 6 of the Guidelines (Quality Checklists for the Inception and Evaluation Report).

- Are the recommendations realistic and is it clearly expressed to whom the recommendations are addressed to?
- Were the most significant stakeholders involved consulted?
- Does the report present the information contained in a presentable and clearly arranged form?
- Is the report free from spelling mistakes and unclear linguistic formulations?
- Can the report be distributed in the delivered form?

The Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations developed by the Austrian Development Agency (2020) need to be considered throughout the entire evaluation process.

Also see:

https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Evaluierung/Evaluierungs_Leitfaeden/Guidelines_for_Programme_and_Project_Evaluations_ADA_2020.pdf

6) Workplan

The **time frame** of the whole procedure is from **January 2026** (commencement of the tendering procedure) until **August 2026** (submission of the final evaluation report).

For the evaluation itself app. **50 working days** are estimated.

The evaluation is planned to start **March 28, 2026**. The evaluation results should be available in the form of a detailed report by **August 7, 2026**. For more details, please consult the Timetable below.

Action	Date
Submission of bids (electronically)	28/02/2026 12:00 a.m. CET
Contract signed and documents provided	until 28/03/2026
Start of evaluation and desk study	28/03/2026
Kick-Off meeting (meeting between contractor/consortium and evaluation team) (via zoom in case a physical meeting is not possible)	tbc Until 10/04/2026

Action	Date
Submission of draft inception report	29/04/2026
Provision of comments (contractor/consortium)	05/05/2026
Inclusion of comments in inception report and submission of the final inception report	10/05/2026
Field Visit, interviews etc. and feedback workshop (followed by data analysis and report writing) <i>NOTE: Only after the ADA agrees in writing to the inception report, can data collection begin, including any potential field missions.</i>	in the period 18/05/2026 - 21/06/2026
Submission of draft report	11/07/2026
Provision of feedback (contractor/consortium)	24/07/2026
Inclusion of feedback in draft report and submission of final evaluation report (hard copy and electronic copy) to the contractor/consortium	until 07/08/2026

7) Evaluation Management Arrangements

Ms. Louise Sperl is the contact person for this evaluation and in charge of the overall coordination of the assignment in close cooperation with the team at the project office in Prishtina. The evaluation management is committed to respect ethical standards and guiding principles for evaluation including impartiality and independence.

Contact details:

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8) Requirements for the Evaluator(s)

A tendering procedure will be applied in order to find a suitable evaluation team. The evaluation team will be chosen by the consortium partners on a 'best quality for price'-principle basis. Therefore, tenders need to prove below key qualifications by means of CVs and a list of already undertaken evaluation activities (references). Tenderers have to describe and explain in their written offers also their understanding of the assignment, their suggested evaluation approach and methodology, as well as their suggested work plan and division of tasks/work within the evaluation team. A clear plan for the division of labour between the evaluation team leader and the other team members need to be provided.

Eligible applicants have to prove the following:

- Proven experience and expertise in the area of higher education and research systems and of current developments in higher education and research in the European Union and South Eastern Europe;
- Preferably specific experience and expertise in the following areas: curriculum development, university-economy cooperation and employability, quality assurance, inter-university cooperation, accreditation, capacity building and development assistance in higher education; European Research Area development; systems of research and innovation development (especially in transition countries);
- Proven experience in leading and/or conducting evaluations: at least three evaluations in the field of higher education and research in the last five years;
- Proven experience in applying qualitative and quantitative methods in project/program evaluations, including developing questionnaires, interviewing.
- Proven experience and expertise in evaluating cross-cutting issues (notably gender and minority equality as well as social standards) and on the human rights based approach.
- Proven experience in project cycle management and the logical framework/Theory of Change approach;
- Excellent oral and written English skills
- Experience and expertise in Kosovo or Western Balkans and its specifics (language, history, socio-economic background and so forth) is an asset;

The evaluation team should generally consist of at least two and not exceed four persons. Furthermore, a gender-balanced and diverse team is desired. The complementarity of qualifications within the team and suitability of the team will be part of the assessment. Besides international evaluators also national experts or experts from the respective region should be integrated into the evaluation team. The composition of the evaluation team will be proposed by the tenderers but is subject to approval by the consortium.



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The independence of the evaluation team is of fundamental significance. The evaluators must not have been involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of this project.

9) Specifications for the Submission of Offers

The **tendering deadline is on 28th February 2026 at 12:00 a.m. CET**. The tenders must be deposited at WUS AT via email: louise.sperl@wus-austria.org.

The submitted offer has to contain a technical part (detailing the organisation and methodology of the evaluation to meet the stipulated purpose and objective as well as the CVs) and a financial part. The weight given to the technical and financial part (in percentage) will be 70:30. The selection and contracting will be based on the 'best quality for price' - principle. The maximum available budget is Euro 80.000 (all in, fees including travel/subsistence).

In detail, the **offer** for the evaluation shall include the following:

- A significant description of the methods to be employed in the evaluation and of the organisation of the evaluation;
- The CVs of the evaluators highlighting also their relevant experiences incl. a description of the division of labour and their specific assignments during the evaluation;
- Reference projects;
- A detailed cost plan differentiating between work fees, travel costs and daily allowances and other costs, such as interpretation, visa etc. The offer has to include VAT, if applicable

10.) ANNEXES:

- SHER Logframe Matrix
- [Results Assessment Form](#) (RAF), ADA Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations, Annex 9
- [Template for Evaluation Matrix](#), ADA Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations, Annex 7
- Social Standard Assessment