TERMS OF REFERENCE
CONSULTANT / RESEARCH EXPERT
FOR PROJECT EVALUATION

Project: Black Sea NGO Forum, 9th edition, 2016 (Follow-up Activity)
Assignment: Conducting a project evaluation of the Black Sea NGO Forum (2012-2016 editions)
Countries covered by the project: Black Sea countries – Non-EU: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine & EU: Bulgaria, Greece and Romania
Period of contract: 4 months (June – September 2017)
Type of contract: Consultancy contract
Budget: 3000 USD (including taxes)
Open to: Consultants / Research experts
Deadline for submitting applications: 25 May 2017
Submit to: forum@blackseango.org

I. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The current call for applications targets consultants / research experts with experience in the field of project/programme evaluation, with the purpose of conducting an evaluation of the Black Sea NGO Forum project for the period 2012-2016, having the following objectives:

1. Providing a mapping of the non-governmental organisations which participated at the annual editions of the Black Sea NGO Forum (2012-2016) and its follow-up activities, in terms of: total number of organisations/edition, number of new organisations/edition, number of organisations/countries, field of work, financial capacity, number of permanent employees/volunteers;

2. Providing a mapping of the bilateral projects, regional projects, partnerships, initiatives and networks of non-governmental organisations facilitated by the Black Sea NGO Forum and its follow-up activities, divided per country and field of work, specifying the support that was offered by the Forum (e.g. access to networking and financial opportunities, new and relevant content presented etc);

3. Gathering a set of recommendations from respondents with regard to the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region, referring to both its directions: 1) creation of regional thematic networks in the identified priority and emerging cooperation areas; and 2) monitoring and promoting an enabling environment for civil society in the Black Sea Region. Recommendations should especially refer to: type of activities which should be implemented in the next 3-5 years; type of support (financial and operational) that the Forum may offer to enable organisations to be more active in the cross-cutting and thematic priorities of the Strategic Framework; role of the Forum on medium/long term.

4. Identifying the added value of the Black Sea NGO Forum (from the participants’ perspective) in comparison to other regional initiatives (e.g. Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, EU-Russia Civil Society Forum etc).
II. RATIONALE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The current assignment is part of the **follow-up activities of the 9th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum**, which is an annual regional event launched in 2008 and organized by the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND), in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy Policy, with the support of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE.

**The goal of the Black Sea NGO Forum** is to create an open space for debate, mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation among civil society representatives, governments, international organisations and donors active in the wider Black Sea Region, with a focus on sharing good practices in various domains and success stories of regional cooperation.

Since its first edition, the **Forum has been a driver of change in the region**, reuniting more than 900 participants with various backgrounds from 11 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania and Russia. Over the years, the Forum has explored together with the participants a diversity of themes of regional interest (democracy & human rights; local development; youth; children rights; environment; citizen participation etc), encouraged multi-stakeholder dialogue, sharing of best practices and creation partnerships, supported fellowships in the region, organised study visits for CSOs and offered awards to CSOs for excellence in promoting regional cooperation. All these activities contributed to building trust and confidence, identifying common challenges and opportunities and addressing them together.

Moreover, the **Black Sea NGO Forum evolved into a more and more structured initiative**, with each edition strategically building on the objectives of the previous editions. Over the years, the objectives of the annual Forum changed from providing a space for discussion and networking to identifying common needs and challenges, developing bilateral and regional projects and creating regional networks.

Considering this evolution, the Black Sea NGO Forum project team along with its partners decided to **re-design the strategic approach of this traditional forum** in order to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability in terms of regional cooperation at the Black Sea.

In order to implement this new approach, the following steps have been taken:

- **Conducting an evaluation of the impact of the Forum after the first 4 editions (2008-2011)**. The impact study showed that, while appreciating the approach of the Forum and recognising its merits, the participants felt the need for a common cooperation framework with medium-term objectives and a permanent structure that would allow the Forum to become a resource facilitator for CSOs in the region and engage more actively in policy and advocacy work at regional level.

- **Organising a Strategic Meeting on the Future of the Black Sea NGO Forum** at the Permanent Representation of Romania to the EU in Brussels to discuss the future strategic directions of the Forum. Based on the participants’ input, the future of the Forum should focus on: its role of resource facilitator in the region; promoting enabling environment for civil society in the region; providing the participants with tangible cooperation and partnership opportunities in the region; allowing for an increased regional ownership of the Forum; developing a more sustainable institutional framework of the Forum.

- **Launching the process of creating a Strategic Framework for Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region** with the occasion of the 7th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (8th-10th of December 2014, Kyiv, Ukraine), by engaging participants in a regional multi-stakeholder consultation on the common needs and challenges for having an enabling environment in which civil society carries out its activity. The consultation was based on CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness - CPDE’s monitoring framework which focuses on three major dimensions: legal framework, policy influencing and donor – CSOs relationships.
- **Conducting a research on “Enabling environment for civil society development in the Black Sea Region: Towards a Regional Strategic for Cooperation”.** Based on the results of the above-mentioned regional consultation, the research offered a national and regional overview of the environment in which civil society from the Black Sea Region operates. Furthermore, another goal of the research was to gather a set of recommendations regarding the most important cooperation areas that should be included in a strategic framework for civil society cooperation in the region. As a result, participants recommended that the Forum focused on **two main directions:**

  1) **Promoting an enabling environment for civil society** in the region; and
  2) **Facilitating horizontal cooperation** in specific thematic areas.

Moreover, they praised the Forum for being an impartial mechanism for facilitating regional cooperation between CSOs, donors and domestic governments.

- **Finalising the Strategic Framework for Civil Society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region.** Based on the above-mentioned recommendations, a facilitated consultation process was launched during the 8th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (2nd – 3rd of November 2015, Tbilisi, Georgia), in order to identify and prioritise the most important thematic cooperation areas to be included in the final Strategic Framework for Civil society Cooperation in the Black Sea Region. In the end, the following **10 cooperation areas** have been identified and endorsed by vote:

  1) **Priority cooperation areas:** knowledge networks, anti-corruption, civic engagement, youth and education & culture;
  2) **Emerging cooperation areas:** sustainable development, youthbanks, human rights & freedoms, networking, media & communications.

In order to encourage the development of regional initiatives and creation of regional thematic networks around these cooperation areas, **10 corresponding working groups** have been created.

- **Beginning to implement the Strategic Framework** by: supporting the organisation of **5 regional thematic meetings** of the Black Sea NGO Forum Working Groups, with the purpose of consolidating their activity and membership towards the goal of creating regional thematic networks; and continuing to monitor the environment in which civil society in the region operates and issuing the **Second edition of the Report Enabling Environment for Civil Society in the Black Sea Region.**

A list with useful resources is available in the annex below. For more background information, please do not hesitate to contact us at: forum@blackseango.org.

### III. TASKS TO BE PERFORMED

The assignment of the consultant / research expert includes the following mandatory activities:

- **Elaborate the evaluation plan and methodology** in accordance with the objectives of the assignment, including at least 1 quantitative and 1 qualitative research method and taking into consideration the above-mentioned background information & documents;

- **Conduct the evaluation** in accordance with the agreed evaluation plan and methodology. The assignment could include up to 2 visits of the consultant / research expert in the region in order to conduct interviews or focus groups, which will be covered separately by FOND;

- **Elaborate an evaluation report of the Black Sea NGO Forum project for the period 2012 - 2016** – the draft version must be presented at the follow-up event of the 9th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (September 2017) and the final version at the 10th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (December 2017).
IV. DELIVERABLES

- Evaluation plan & proposed methodology which should include: process and criteria for selecting participants to be part of the evaluation, sample size, full methodological approach taking into consideration the objectives of the assignment and timeline for implementing the agreed methodology.
- Data sets to include: database of participants included in the research together with contact details, quantitative data received through surveys/questionnaires, qualitative data received through interviews and focus groups (recordings/transcripts if available in English).
- Draft report evaluation report of the Black Sea NGO Forum project for the period 2012 – 2016 (in English), highlighting main findings with regard to the objectives of the assignment;
- Final evaluation report of the Black Sea NGO Forum project for the period 2012 – 2016 (in English) – full version of the evaluation addressing all the objectives of the assignment.

V. OTHER REQUESTS

The Draft evaluation report will be presented at the follow-up event of the 9th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (September 2017), and the Final evaluation report at the 10th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (December 2017). Both presentations in September and December must be made by the consultant/ research expert in person. The participation at these events will be covered by the project and are separate from the 2 above-mentioned field visits that the consultant / research expert might conduct in the region as part of their evaluation.

VI. TIMELINE

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Selection of the consultant/ research expert</td>
<td>Early June 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalising the contracting process</td>
<td>Mid June 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementing the evaluation according to the agreed plan &amp; methodology</td>
<td>Mid June – End of August 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft evaluation report</td>
<td>Early September 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final evaluation report</td>
<td>End of September 2017</td>
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VII. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Consultant/ Research expert:

- Develop the evaluation plan and methodology;
- Conduct the evaluation according to the agreed plan, which will include also a calendar of activities;
- Respect the deadlines established in this ToR – early September for submitting the draft evaluation report and end of September for submitting the final evaluation report to the project team;
- Present the draft evaluation report at the follow-up event of the 9th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (September 2017);
- Present the final version of the evaluation report at the 10th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (December 2017).

The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND (Black Sea NGO Forum - Project team):

- Support the consultant/ research expert with necessary background documents and information about the Black Sea NGO Forum (including contacts of participants);
Provide feedback on the documents resulted from this assignment;
- Cover the consultant’s / research expert’s travel and accommodation expenses should he or she decide to make field visits in the region (2 visits maximum), with the condition that these visits serve the purpose of conducting interviews or focus groups and are well justified by the evaluation plan and methodology.

**VIII. BUDGET**

The total budget for the assignment is 3000 USD, including the taxes that have to be paid to the fiscal authorities by the contracted consultant/ research expert. The budget will cover the fee of the consultant/ research expert. The travel and accommodation costs related to field work will be covered separately by FOND (maximum 2 field visits).

**IX. SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES**

**Required:**
- At least 3 years of experience in evaluation of projects / programmes implemented by civil society organisations;
- Proficiency in English;
- Experience of working in multicultural contexts;
- Excellent interpersonal skills;
- Excellent planning and prioritisation skills;
- Proven ability to adapt the methodology to challenges and opportunities emerging during the evaluation;
- Proven ability to multitask and work under tight deadlines.

**Would be considered an advantage:**
- Knowledge of the context and dynamics specific to the Black Sea Region and/ or experience in working with civil society organisations in the Black Sea Region;
- Knowledge of the Russian language.

**X. APPLICATION PROCESS**

The application procedure consists of two stages:

1) Initial selection

**Interested candidates must send the following application documents by e-mail:** forum@blackseango.org, until the 25th of May 2017, 5:00 PM Romanian time (GMT+2):
- **CV and motivation letter** (in a separate document);
- Two relevant evaluation/ research samples (one preferably on a subject related to civil society/ the samples will not be made public, their use will be solely for the selection process);
- **Evaluation plan** (including a calendar of activities).

Candidates accepted for the interview stage will be announced the results on the 31st of May 2017.

2) Interview

The interviews will take place between 6th and 8th of June 2017, with the possibility of organising the interviews via skype. At the stage of the interview, the selected candidates must demonstrate their motivation and commitment for carrying out the assignment, as well as present the evaluation plan together with the calendar of activities to the project team.
ANNEX 1

USEFUL RESOURCES:

Available online:

Black Sea NGO Forum website: www.blackseango.org

Black Sea NGO Forum annual reports: http://www.blackseango.org/resources(bsf-reports/black-sea-ngo-forum-reports/


Should you need any other information related to the current assignment, do not hesitate to contact us at: forum@blackseango.org.

This activity is part of the follow-up of the 9th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (31st of October – 2nd of November 2016, Varna, Bulgaria), organised by The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND and supported by the European Commission, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with UNDP Regional Centre for Europe and Central Asia, and CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE.