



This project is funded
by the European Union



TERMS OF REFERENCE

General Information

Implementer	European Policy Institute (EPI) – Skopje
Project Title	“Building bridges for a common future: Rule of law in view of EU accession – 2025 work programme” - Annual Work Programme under Framework Partnership Agreement
Donor	EU Delegation Skopje; North Macedonia
Ref. no.	EuropeAid/171328/DD/FPA/MK
Position	Expert on external evaluation of EPI’s work
Start Date	10.04.2025
End Date	01.11.2025
Total Contract	3000 EUR
Contact person	Simonida Kacarska; Director

Organisation’s background

The European Policy Institute - Skopje (EPI) was established in 2011 with the mission to provide a sound base for debate and solutions, targeting decision-makers and the wider public, through high-quality research and proposals on European policy. In a deteriorating environment in North Macedonia both in terms of the European accession prospects and national democratic standards, EPI managed to establish itself as an objective and critical advocate of the EU accession through implementation of national and regional projects. The TTF institutional grant 2011-2013, 2013-2014 and the organisational development grant 2015-2017 were crucial in establishing EPI as a think tank and ensuring its sustainability. The grant provided the much-needed funds for operational functioning of the organisation as well as the much-needed co-financing components in order for EPI to be able to successfully compete for EU grants at the national level.

EPI gradually clustered its work in four main programmes: Monitoring and advocacy of EU accession, Democracy and Rule of Law, Acquis and Sectorial policies and Programme on the monitoring of EU funds. The core of EPI’s work has been policy related research linking of the European accession and requirements to the national and regional transformations. Implementing projects in terms of various aspects of the EU agenda, EPI has been recognised by stakeholders as a hub of expertise on European accession. Overall, the portfolio and partnerships has filled a gap in the research and policy making in North Macedonia and in regional terms. On regional level, EPI was able to effectuate its expertise through networking (regional network of parliamentary committees on EU affairs, TEN Network, WB6 advisory group), in the area of IPA funds, as well as public policy and public administration reform.

Entering into a more mature phase of its development, EPI strived to further upgrade its capacities in the three areas of organisational development: research, dissemination/outreach (per programme) and internal governance.

Ensuring quality of research has been a key objective of EPI since its establishment. EPI was in fact founded because of the “need for more specialized scrutiny, EU policy



This project is funded
by the European Union



recommendations and tangible impact”. Since then, the organisation developed its research portfolio by providing regular analyses related to the EU accession process with applicable and focused policy options and recommendations.

Communication and advocacy activities have always been on the agenda of the organisation. The Communication strategy of EPI has been focused on promoting the Institute among the policy makers, and achieving higher level of visibility among the EU policy creators within national institutions, academia and civil society sector. Through various forms of communication and outreach, EPI has positioned itself as a reliable source for providing expert knowledge relevant to policy makers.

Due to the specificity of its policy products, EPI has been practicing a targeted communication approach. In all projects attention has been devoted to matching target groups and relevant aspects of a particular policy issue. As a result, we have been generating tailor-made policy options for specific audiences and communicating research results through various policy documents. Many activities were undertaken to reach additional target groups, foremost in Brussels as the hub of EU-related decision-making and the EU MS capital cities.

Regarding the internal management, good governance is exercised through separation of powers between different governing bodies. According to the statute, EPI has the following governing bodies: Assembly, Management board, Supervisory board and Director. The Director is the chair of the Management board. The Assembly whose composition reflects EPI's membership, is the highest decision-making body of the EPI. The Management Board is responsible for the overall management of the EPI, although day-to-day management is assigned to the Director who is a member of the Board and accountable to the Board. The Board in turn is accountable to the Assembly. The Council was established in March 2016 as an advisory body consisting of prominent EU experts from North Macedonia and abroad.

Project Information

EPI's 2025 annual work programme on rule of law in view EU accession contributes to the fulfilment of the strategic objectives of the organisation's Strategic plan 2022-2026. It also contributes to supporting long-term commitment of civil society actors in influencing public sector reforms through evidence based programmes, analysis, monitoring, and concrete advocacy and action initiatives.

The 2025 annual work programme responds to the particular needs and constraints of North Macedonia as a candidate country engaged in the screening process since July 2022, following a change of government, pending constitutional amendments, and concerns over interference in judicial independence.

Moreover, EPI's 2025 annual work programme on rule of law in view of EU accession contributes to the need for strengthened watchdog, policy monitoring and public advocacy of the civil society organisations for the implementation of policies and legislation, with a focus on those related to the EU key reforms in rule of law. The annual work programme aims at organisational strengthening, policy advocacy and innovative activities at the priority sector **justice and rule of law**, in view of EU accession. At the



This project is funded
by the European Union



same time, the annual work programme will also provide reliable and expert information for the public through our media outreach and will assist in the understanding of the rule of law as a key element of EU accession overall.

The intervention logic of the annual work programme builds upon EPI's experience and combines the **strongest assets** of the organisation in terms of delivering targeted policy proposals, engaging stakeholders on policy proposals and supporting public policy dialogue on rule of law in view of EU accession. With this programme, EPI will further develop the monitoring of rule of law in view of EU accession and create regular possibilities for CSO engagement, dialogue and co-creation with the stakeholders.

Main activities:

The proposed activities are organised in three clusters closely interlinked to the annual work programme of the organisation, and contribute to the sustainable rule of law reforms in the country in view of EU accession, as the **expected impact** of our Strategic Plan and annual working programme in the rule of law in view of EU accession.

The first cluster **MONITOR & CONTRIBUTE TO RULE OF LAW** supports EPI's monitoring and research activities related to rule of law foreseen in the working programme.

In the 2nd cluster **ENGAGE & COMMUNICATE supports EPIs** established practices of engaging with high level policy makers from the national and EU level and communication efforts via traditional or social media with stakeholders and citizens at wide.

The 3rd cluster **ADVANCE** combines activities which will strengthen EPI's internal capacities for watchdog, policy monitoring and advocacy with a focus on rule of law in view of EU accession. The activities in this cluster in the annual work programme 2025 consist of an independent organisational evaluation, implementation of enhanced M&S system and procedures and an internal session on gender mainstreaming through gender equality plan, as well as a workshop on advancing internal procedures. These activities should improve EPI's internal work, but also assist in the sensibilisation on gender issues throughout the implementation of all the envisaged activities in the work programme.

Main tasks and responsibilities:

The activity of performing external evaluation of EPI's work is designed to assess the perspectives of EPI staff and external stakeholders on the success of implementing the Organisation's 2022-2026 Strategic Work Plan, adopted under the 2022 Annual Work Programme. The **main objectives** included in the Strategy are to: 1) Contribute to a sustainable EU agenda with a focus on rule of law; 2) Contribute to developing new narratives of the EU accession process and 3) Strengthen EPI's management, research quality and sustainability. By completing these objectives, it was envisaged that the following **long term outcomes** would be achieved:

- Increased role of EPI in tackling rule of law reforms in view of EU accession through providing structured input and engagement with key policy makers;
- Improved CSO led dialogue and advocacy on rule of law in view of EU accession;



This project is funded
by the European Union



- EPI's recommendations the cross-fertilization of the rule of law discussion between the European Union and the Council of Europe are used by decision-makers, political and civil sector representatives;
- National and EU institutions regularly use the products and concepts on rule of law developed by EPI and the networks in which it participates;
- EPI is a significant contributor to recognised CSOs networks at national and regional level dealing with EU accession;
- National and EU institutions are using EPI's findings to support current and future EU integration process of the Western Balkans;
- EPI's findings are included in shaping the regional narrative on EU accession of the Western Balkans;
- EPI is well-managed, financially sustainable and with acknowledged reputation;
- EPI's staff shows satisfaction with the internal management, capacity building activities and opportunities for personal development and growth.

The strategy's objectives and long-term outcomes build on strengths identified in EPI's first independent external evaluation in 2017, while addressing areas needing improvement. The findings of this year's evaluation will be incorporated in a new strategic plan for the period 2026-2030 embedding the findings into organisational interventions.

The Expert on external evaluation of EPI's work will have the following tasks and responsibilities:

1. Relevance of the programs vs. mission and vision (with a particular focus on the Democracy and Rule of Law Program)

The evaluation should determine if the programs (and especially the Democracy and Rule of Law Program) are established for the realization of the mission and vision of the organisation, their relevance for the broader context and results achieved to justify their establishment.

2. Relevance and the quality of the policy research (products) per program (with a particular focus on the Democracy and Rule of Law Program)

The evaluation should be based on a sample of policy products (especially in the rule of law area) representative of the organisation's research portfolio (ideally a mix of different papers/studies/briefs in the first years and other products produced more recently). The expert will select the sample of policy papers in cooperation with EPI. The expert will determine the criteria for assessment. Initial suggestions include:

- Quality of argument in relation to stated objectives
- Level of presentation/readability (partially according to stated audience)
- Level of usability (actionable recommendations and or prescriptions)
- Levels of innovation (in relation to messaging, new subject areas, other)

3. Communications and advocacy efforts

The evaluation should determine existence and quality of the organisation's overall communication and advocacy efforts. The evaluation should reflect on the overall image

and identity of the organisation in the public's mind and policy community, including regional and EU areas of engagement.

4. Governance and overall organisational management capacity

The evaluation should determine the ability and efforts of the organisation's leadership, governance bodies, and staff to manage and develop EPI quality work and to fundraise for further development of policy research efforts.

For the aforementioned tasks, the proposed method of evaluation is desk research and interviews with stakeholders, beneficiaries and staff.

Qualifications

1. At least 10 years of experience in the civil society sector;
2. Experience in monitoring and evaluation – at least five evaluations carried out on projects carried out by CSOs;
3. Excellent knowledge of Macedonian and English language, while knowledge Albanian would be considered an asset.

Remuneration

The total fee for this position is 3000 EUR gross and will be paid in the period of 10 days after completing the tasks.

Timeframe

Task	Period/Deadline
1. Inception phase (further development of the ToR and methodology by the expert, desk research)	15.05.2025
2. Field/interview phase-interviews with stakeholders, beneficiaries, staff	15.07.2025
3. Synthesis phase-analysis of input, preparation and delivery of draft evaluation report	15.09.2025
4. Final evaluation report with recommendations for improvement	01.11.2025

How to apply

To apply for the call, you need to send a CV in English and/or Macedonian, a proposed work plan (maximum 2 pages) and 3 references from previous similar engagements to the email address contact@epi.org.mk, with the subject of the email: Application for an expert for independent evaluation of the organization, **no later than 28 March 2025**.

The evaluation will be conducted based on the quality of the documents submitted in the applications.

For all additional information regarding the call, please contact contact@epi.org.mk, no later than 27 March 2025.