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# **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

## **1.1. Partner country**

Republic of Albania

## **1.2. Contracting authority**

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTKS)

## **1.3. Country background**

The Republic of Albania has signed with EU an Agreement of Stabilisation and Association in 2006 which has become effective since April 2009. In the meantime, Albania is a potential candidate country, status which was received in June 2014. The ASA has exposed Albania to access the second funding under EU Pre-accession Instrument such as Adriatic IPA Cross Boarder 2014 – 2020. Recent studies in Albania have indicated a moderate level of support to the EU integration process (over 85%), regardless the delay in receiving the status of EU candidate country. Nevertheless, it is estimated that the knowledge and understanding about what EU represents, principles it stands for, human rights and extension process, remains weak for the population at large

SEEDS project moves from growing awareness of the importance of structuring the cultural and creative sector in a more business-like and entrepreneurial dimension in the S.A. Area, addressing the lack of synergy between creativity, culture, and enterprise. Given the high potential this cross-cutting sector could unleash, there is a clear need for a blend of culture, creativity, and business logic, making culture a financially viable sector.

An emblematic example of this trend is the reform in Albania regarding the Ministry of Economy, Culture, and Innovation. This change of competences and nomenclature explicitly highlights and aims to strengthen the connection between cultural sectors, economic production and innovation capabilities. In addition, SEEDS Project addresses the lack of connection between CCIs, focusing on those operating in the performing arts, events, live shows, and fairs sectors, and the world of stakeholders co-responsible for the realisation of such events or shows. On the one hand, local administrations often find themselves unable to understand which enterprises to turn to in order to organize such events in their territories. On the other hand, CCI SMEs lack the necessary skills to promote their expertise on the market.

All of this results in a gap of untapped potential, in terms of productivity, economic development and innovation, and from a social perspective, in terms of the limited cultural offerings in the territories, which also has a ripple effect on the tourism sector. In response to this situation, SEEDS intends to develop and test a model that strengthens the entrepreneurial capabilities of the cultural and creative sectors, also leveraging collaboration among partners selected to cover the entire program area as well as different areas of expertise. The project will carry out activities allowing creative cultural ecosystems and local stakeholders to connect more easily and help cultural and creative enterprises grow through:

- the analysis of possible measures to support the cultural and creative sector, with a focus on fiscal measures that support the sector, to be integrated into the Cross-border SEEDS Strategy;
- the creation of a community of practice to develop synergies among the different actors involved;
- a training program dedicated to cultural and creative enterprises, enhanced by a CB Helpdesk that will serve as a support for the development of these sectors;
- a pilot action in which the new skills and connections developed will be showcased and applied, within the framework of the SEEDS Showcase and the SEEDS Festival.

Lessons learned will be gathered to outline a structured plan for the project's follow-up and ensure its sustainability, benefiting the Southern Adriatic Area by impacting the growth of the entrepreneurial fabric of a sector that is so important to local communities under economic, social, and cultural perspective.

#### 1.4. Current situation in the sector

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports (MTCS), as defined by Article 100 of the Constitution, Law no. 90/2012, and the Council of Ministers' latest Decision on its field of state responsibility, possesses an extensive institutional mandate and long-standing experience across four major sectors: tourism, culture and cultural heritage, sports, and youth. These competences align closely with the thematic areas addressed by the project and form a solid foundation for its successful implementation. In the field of tourism, the Ministry is responsible for drafting and implementing national tourism policies, with a particular focus on sustainable development, destination promotion, quality standards, and sectoral education. This institutional experience supports the project's objectives related to enhancing tourism products, strengthening professional capacities, and promoting integrated territorial development. In culture and cultural heritage, MTCS leads the formulation of protective and promotional policies, including the revitalization of material and immaterial heritage, the encouragement of artistic creativity and cultural industries, and the preservation of written culture. It also oversees copyright regulation and fosters international cultural cooperation. These competences are essential for project components dealing with heritage protection, cultural programming, creative sector development, and cross-border cultural dialogue. In sports, the Ministry designs and implements state policies, manages public sports facilities, supervises the use of state funds allocated to sports organizations, and coordinates with national sports structures. This experience contributes to project actions involving sports infrastructure, community engagement, and youth participation through sports.

Regarding youth, MTCS holds the mandate to protect youth rights, promote inclusion, and ensure active youth participation at national and international level. It develops youth programs, cooperates with civil society and diaspora structures, and leads exchange initiatives. This expertise is directly relevant for the project's youth-focused activities, including training, mobility actions, and the creation of participatory spaces.

SEEDS project addresses several common territorial challenges that impact the development and competitiveness of cultural and creative industries, particularly in the South Adriatic region. One of the challenges SEEDS faces is the lack of entrepreneurship, visibility and recognition for the development of cultural and creative industries. While KICs were important economic contributors before the COVID-19 pandemic, they are not widely recognized for their socio-economic impact compared to other sectors such as manufacturing. This is partly due to the nature of KIC SMEs, which mainly consist of freelancers and micro-enterprises (1-9 employees), with fewer high-growth companies. As a result, public awareness of the contributions of KICs is limited. Furthermore, many creative professionals work from home, reducing their physical visibility in cities and entrepreneurial zones, contributing to a lack of presence in local business ecosystems. As a result, stakeholders (such as event organizers, local businesses, public agencies and community groups) often fail to effectively seek and attract the contribution of local creative professionals when organizing cultural events, performances and exhibitions. Conversely, many CCIs struggle to market their services effectively and connect with potential customers, which leads to underutilized talent and lost collaboration opportunities. In addition to the problem of the contact gap between CCI SMEs and stakeholders, here is the current situation and bottlenecks of the EU creative and cultural industry. In 2021, there were 1.9 million cultural enterprises in the EU, generating around €183 billion in added value, or 1.9% of the total non-financial business economy. The net turnover of the cultural sector reached around €448 billion, or 1.5% of the total net turnover of the EU non-financial business economy. In particular, a quarter of these cultural enterprises were engaged in the arts and entertainment sectors.

Despite Europe's rich cultural heritage and the growing recognition of the economic potential of the cultural and creative industries sector, the South Adriatic region faces significant challenges. First, the region's CCI sector struggles with a shortage of adequately trained professionals and faces difficulties in attracting new talent. This is particularly critical in sectors such as performing arts, audiovisual production and new creative technologies, where there is a growing demand for skilled technicians and creative professionals. However, the current workforce often lacks the necessary qualifications. Second,

the COVID19 crisis has severely impacted businesses that rely on physical interactions, including cultural activities. The lengthy recovery process, combined with changes in cultural consumption patterns, has further strained live performance businesses and related SMEs. As a result, these businesses require targeted support for recovery and adaptation. The pandemic has also accelerated digital trends, the sector needs to improve digital skills to encourage wider digital adoption, while entrepreneurial and managerial skills need to be upgraded to support professionalization and scalability. Like other sectors, CCIs are undergoing a transformation towards greener and more digital business models. However, many small and micro-enterprises within the sector struggle to adapt due to limited resources and a lack of targeted support and training.

Furthermore, the absence of robust policies and governance frameworks continues to hinder the growth of CCI SMEs. For example, issues such as copyright laws, cultural tax credits and artists' mobility are not adequately addressed, limiting the sector's growth and innovation potential. Therefore, in WP1, a new cultural governance model will be developed to improve the CCI sector's CB policy and assess, improve and recommend participatory activities to support the strengthening of the South Adriatic regions' cultural and creative industries. Finally, the CCI sector in the South Adriatic region remains fragmented along national and linguistic lines, limiting cross-border collaboration and the potential for shared artistic production and distribution. This fragmentation hinders the creation of a cohesive regional market for cultural products and services, reducing competitiveness both locally and internationally. In WP2, SEEDS will focus on building capacity and enhancing competitiveness within the CCI sector. Outreach activities will engage stakeholders, including SMEs, professionals, and institutions, to foster participation, encourage knowledge sharing, and facilitate the transfer of best practices. The Cross-Border Pilot Action in WP3, through simulating and testing new cultural governance models and creating a CB art distribution and production system, directly supports the goals of the program and helps SMEs in the CCI within SA regions overcome the challenges they face.

SEEDS projects identifies a set of activities that will contribute to addressing the relevant common challenges as mentioned above, i.e., the untapped potential of the CCI sector at cross border level for a sustainable socioeconomic development of the entire Programme area.

Particularly, SEEDS project focuses on the uneven, and in some areas the under development of the CCI sector and SMEs, which is closely connected with the effect of the COVID pandemics on the already weak fabric of the Creative and Cultural Industry's Small and Medium Enterprises (and often Micro Enterprises) in the South Adriatic area. This, in turn, is linked to the lack of Cross Border opportunities for SMEs collaborations, and the lack of recognition and visibility towards the institutional stakeholders and also with the general public regarding the role and the CCIs in the local social and economic development.

In such context, SEEDS project envisages a series of opportunities to seize, such as, first of all, the possibility and the necessity to develop stable processes for CCIs collaboration and work at local and cross border level; thus, to improve the Regulatory Framework that may not only remove bottleneck but boost economic activities and create momentum for CCI's SMEs; finally, to strengthen CCIs' SMEs visibility, recognition, and impact on the processes for the CB sustainable development. The set of activities that will allow SEEDS partnership to tackle the above mentioned common challenges and to seize the envisaged opportunities, consists in the following:

- Policy assessment and review: in order to remove obstacles to the Creative and Cultural sector it is important to assess the regulatory frameworks in the territories involved in the project and formulate recommendations for their improvement, so as to unleash the potential of CCI SMEs.
- Knowledge Sharing & Capacity Building: very importantly, the project will ensure that knowledge, expertise, and lessons learned from within the partnership, but also from best practices implemented outside the partnership, are shared and built upon, so as to provide methods and define processes that encourage the CCIs SMEs activity and collaboration.

- Model of Governance of the CCI sectors at CB level: the policy review and the capacity building activities will pave the way to the definition of a new manner of managing all Creative and Cultural processes and stakeholders at Cross Border level, leveraging potential and opportunities, for effective processes of Artistic Production and Distribution across the South Adriatic Region. Furthermore, the Model will foresee an Agreement among relevant stakeholders (Public Institutions, CCI SMEs, CCI operators, etc.) ensuring commitment and durability.
- Community of Practice: the chances to action the activities outlined above, and to ensure that they work effectively, will be far greater due to the development of CB Community of Practices of the CCI SMEs and professionals. The concept of communities of practice (McLuhan & Wenger), defines groups with the ultimate goal of generating organised and high-quality knowledge, freely accessible to all members, allowing them to learn from the experiences of others. Here, the foundation of communities of practice lies in the idea that learning is primarily an experiential and social process, one that involves negotiating new meanings within a community characterised by strong and continuous interaction. Through this interaction, individuals share their knowledge and skills, enhancing collective learning and contributing to the development of shared expertise within the group.
- Joint Pilot Action: it will be the opportunity to test the effectiveness of all the activities outlined above, i.e., the New Model of Governance of the CCI sector, including the CB processes for Artistic Production and Distribution, the Capacity Building activities and the Community of Practice developed.

Such activities and solutions will contribute to addressing the relevant common challenges and ensure positive outcomes of the SEEDS project.

### **1.5. Related programmes and other donor activities**

- I. Project name “*Highlighting Artisanal Manufacturing, culture and Eco Tourism (HAMLET)*”. The overall objective of the project HAMLET is to enhance historical centres, villages and small towns, and highlight the environmental and cultural assets of the selected territories. By developing a common strategy for tourism management, the project aims to boost cooperation between Italy, Albania and Montenegro, bringing up to the same standard the level of products and services offered, gathered under a unique cross border brand, identifying the peculiarities of the Adriatic area. At the same time, the introduction of the involved areas into the tourism circuit will boost local economy, with positive effects on employment and social well-being. (<https://hamlet.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/>).
- II. Project name “*Culture in MOTion in Adriatic NETwork of Museums (MONET)*”. The core of the project MONET is the creation of a network model among museums in Albania, Montenegro, Apulia and Molise, by following a common methodology and providing new services and tools. The aim of the project is the promotion of natural and cultural heritage, through the valorisation of museums, in terms of management and services. Enabling museums to share a new cross border dimension of management will improve the tourist and cultural offer and, consequently, visitors’ flows. This will lead to tourist growth and sustainable and economic development. (<https://monet.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/>)
- III. Project name “*Cross-border exchange for the development of Cultural and Creative industries (3C)*”. “3C - Cross-border exchange for the development of Cultural and Creative industries” aims at enhancing cooperation between CCI actors in the project area, through the creation of innovative centres with residential arts programmes and joint cross-border cooperation networks. By revitalizing heritage through contemporary art, the project will contribute to reconnecting culture and territory, and share knowledge, experience, and creative potential. Main results are the

introduction of a Regional Arts Mobility and Visiting Programme, the opening of four multifunctional cultural centres in Montenegro, Italy and Albania and the establishment of a cross-border network of cultural entrepreneurs. (<https://3c.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/>)

- IV. Project name “*Networking for Smart Tourism Development (NEST)*”. NEST aims to sustain socio-economic growth in the Programme area, by empowering the small and medium tourism enterprises with innovative approaches, tools and strategies, that leverage digital technologies and networking. NEST will favour the creation of an ‘Interreg smart destination’ strategic model, by adopting collaborative and user-driven innovation tools, inspired by the Living Lab Approach. The main expected results are the development of a Smart Tourism Destination Action Plan, and the creation of cross border experiential paths valorising natural and cultural assets as well as landscapes, traditions, folks and crafts. (<https://nest.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/>)
- V. Project name “*Promoting Accessible and Sustainable Tourism for Future (P.A.S.T.4 Future)*”. The main goal of P.A.S.T.4Future is to promote and strengthen the Accessible and Sustainable (A&S) tourist offer in the cross-border area, between Italy, Albania and Montenegro, through the diversification of tourist products and services. Promoting A&S Tourism for the Future implies the development of a slow tourism network, capable of respecting biodiversity, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as tourists’ needs, including people with special needs, through web-oriented technologies and specialized services. This will lead to the creation of a cross-border A&S Community Tourist Destination and the increase of tourist flows. (<https://past4future.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/>)
- VI. Project name “*Creative Europe 2021 - 2027*”. Creative Europe invests in actions that reinforce cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sectors. The main objectives of the programme are to safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage; increase the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audiovisual sector. The novelties of the programme will contribute to the recovery of these sectors, reinforcing their efforts to become more inclusive, more digital and environmentally more sustainable. (<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/about-the-creative-europe-programme> )

## **2. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS**

The SEEDS project is highly relevant to pillar 4 of EUSAIR strategy:

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, which aims to develop the tourism potential of the Adriatic-Ionian Region through innovation, diversification, and promoting responsible tourism. CCI SMEs have the potential to make a significant positive contribution to the development of other economic sectors, including tourism and its sustainable growth. They can therefore hardly be fully ignored by any region and shall not only be considered for their own economic weight and development potential, but also as an enabler for the competitiveness of the whole economy. By fostering growth and innovation within the CCI SME, SEEDS contributes to the diversification of tourism products in the region. This includes promoting CB cultural events, exhibitions and performances that can attract tourists year-around, helping to reduce the seasonality of tourism demand. The Cultural Showcase in WP3 will help enrich the tourism offer, blending cultural heritage with innovative artistic and creative products. Capacity-building activities, such as outreach campaigns, community sessions, and entrepreneurship support, directly strengthen the skills and knowledge of professionals in the CCI sector. By doing so, SEEDS enhances the region’s ability to offer sustainable and high-quality tourism services rooted in cultural assets. The signing of networking agreements and the establishment of a Cross-Border System for Artistic Distribution & Production also ensures ongoing cooperation and integration across the region, contributing to the long-term sustainability of project outcomes.

SEEDS includes a monitoring and sustainability component, ensuring that the models of cultural governance and CB cooperation are not only implemented but also evaluated for long term viability.

EUSAIR's Flagship:

In particular, the flagship initiative GREEN MAPPING integrates CCI practices into responsible tourism through participatory governance and sustainable business models. It supports the development and promotion of quality assessed micro and SME tourism operations and destinations across the EUSAIR region by assessing, mapping, and improving their sustainability and competitiveness, while boosting their visibility and market access. SEEDS also directly contributes to the AIR Cultural Routes flagship initiative, which aims to harmonize tourism flows across macro-regional territories by using cultural routes as a tool to create diversified, sustainable tourism products. Specifically, SEEDS will facilitate the establishment of a cross-border framework that will connect local cultural routes and strengthen regional connectivity. Through participatory governance models and collaborative policy-making, the project will contribute to the creation of interconnected artistic distribution and production systems, thus ensuring that cultural tourism products are not limited by national borders. By integrating creative industries and SMEs into the cultural routes framework, SEEDS fosters innovative tourism products that leverage both traditional and contemporary cultural assets (e.g., digital arts, live performances, and creative spaces). These efforts will diversify the region's cultural offerings, attracting different tourist segments such as those interested in cycling, hiking, or sailing cultural routes. SEEDS actively engages EUSAIR stakeholders, including regional policymakers, cultural institutions, SMEs, and civil society organizations. These stakeholders are involved through participatory policy reviews, cross-border artistic showcases, and capacity-building activities aimed at improving governance and supporting the growth of the cultural and creative industries.

The SEEDS project contributes to the European Industrial Strategy by aligning with key objectives related to the green and digital transitions, resilience, and the competitiveness of SMEs in the cultural and creative sectors. By focusing on cross-border collaboration and building networks among SMEs, cultural professionals, and institutions in the South Adriatic region, SEEDS strengthens the resilience of the cultural and creative industries, a key sector in the broader industrial ecosystem. The project fosters collaboration and exchange, enabling the sector to recover and grow after the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. To accelerate the Twin transitions (Green and Digital), SEEDS will help SMEs adopt digital innovations, enhancing their competitiveness, promoting ecofriendly practices and encouraging them in the creative industries to adopt sustainable solutions by integrating digital tools into the CCI sectors. Additionally, by strengthening interregional partnerships and promoting sustainable business models, SEEDS helps reduce dependencies within the cultural and creative sectors. The project ensures the cultural industries remain competitive and resilient in the face of global challenges, contributing to the EU's broader goal of open strategic autonomy.

The SEEDS project contributes to the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026 by promoting innovative, sustainable, and cross-border frameworks for cultural and creative SMEs, aligning with key EU objectives related to empowering the cultural and creative sectors, enhancing cultural participation, and fostering international partnerships. By involving a wide range of stakeholders and promoting participatory public policy reviews and policy recommendation drafting (laws for copyright, tax credits, and mobility for artists) in WP1, SEEDS enhances cultural participation and strengthens the cultural governance framework. Activity such as Outreach campaigns, Community sessions and supporting the establishment of startups and entrepreneurship targeting SMEs, professionals, and institutions, fostering resilience and sustainable growth for creative professionals in the South Adriatic region, which aligns with the EU Work Plan's goals of strengthening CCI SMEs and ensuring fair working conditions.

SEEDS' cross-border pilot actions also contribute to the "Culture for Co-Creative Partnerships: Strengthening the Cultural Dimension of EU External Relations" initiative by fostering cross-border collaboration between Albania, Montenegro, and Italy, SEEDS strengthens the cultural ties across South Adriatic countries. It promotes the co-creation of policies and a network of CCIs, which are essential for democratic participation and innovation in the face of regional challenges.

## **2.1. Overall objective**

The overall objective (Impact) to which this action contributes is Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments. To enhance the sustainable growth and competitiveness of Cultural and Creative SMEs and professionals in the South Adriatic area by fostering cross-border collaboration, improving cultural governance, and supporting policy innovation.

The External Expertise will contribute to the successful implementation of the SEEDS project by:

- Ensuring effective project management in line with the work plan, timeline, and EU programme rules.
- Maintaining financial management and reporting in compliance with PRAG, including preparation for audits.
- Supporting the Contracting Authority in risk management, coordination, and compliance.
- Facilitating smooth communication with project partners and stakeholders.

## **2.2. Specific objective(s)**

- Supporting the Contracting Authority to implement the SEEDS Project, IPA South Adriatic Programme 2021-2027, according to Cooperation Agreement No. SA-0300350/SEEDS, Application Form and approved budget, Work Packages WP1, WP2 and WP3, Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme Rules, PRAG Manual, as well as Albanian legislation.
- Support for the development of the SEEDS Cross-Border Strategy (WP1).
- Support for the New Cultural Governance Model and Advisory Hub (WP2).
- Support for the Pilot Action and Memorandum of Understanding (WP3).
- Ensuring monitoring, reporting and quality control.

## **2.3. Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor**

The service will be paid on the basis of the delivery of the specified output(s). Payments might be totally or partially withheld if the contractual result(s) have not been reached in conformity with the detailed terms of reference. Payment(s) is/are based on the approval of this/these deliverable(s). Partial payment has to be determined according to the partial implementation of the output(s).

The expected outputs of this contract:

### **I. Management and Coordination Support**

- Overall coordination with MTKS and international partners
- Planning and follow-up of activities according to Work Packages
- Support in organizing meetings and events

### **II. Support for WP1 – Cross-Border Competitive Framework**

- Drafting and sector analysis
- Structuring of the Cross-Border Analysis Report
- Drafting of legal and fiscal recommendations
- Support for the Cross-Border Strategy and the Cross-Border System Agreement

### **III. Support for WP2 – Capacity Building**

- Structuring of the Community of Practice
- Consulting and structuring of the SEEDS Advisory Hub
- Support for the SME service packages
- Development of monitoring and reporting tools

### **IV. Support for WP3 – Pilot Action**

- Methodological framework for the implementation of the pilot
- Development of evaluation and reporting indicators
- Drafting of the Evaluation Report
- Support for the Memorandum of Understanding and the 5-year plan of sustainability

#### V. Financial Support and Reporting

- Verification and assistance for financial reports
- Compliance with PRAG rules and the program
- Audit-ready documentation

### 3. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

#### 3.1. Assumptions underlying the project

The SEEDS project aims to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) SMEs and cross-border integration in the South Adriatic area

Key challenges and risks:

- Market fragmentation and limited cross-border cooperation;
- Insufficient entrepreneurial and managerial capacities;
- Weak integration of legal and fiscal measures;
- Lack of structured cross-border governance mechanisms.

### 4. SCOPE OF THE WORK

#### 4.1. General

##### 4.1.1. Description of the assignment

The External Technical Assistance for supporting the Contracting Authority, operating as the Lead Partner in the project implementation from managerial, financial and technical point of view.

**Maximum Budget: 35,000.00 Euro**

##### 4.1.2. Geographical area to be covered

Republic of Albania

##### 4.1.3. Target groups

- Local public authority: Local governments will gain better access to local creative talent and resources for organising events, performances, and community activities. They will also benefit from improved cultural strategies that enhance local economic development through the creative industries.
- Regional public Authority: Regional authorities will be able to foster stronger regional cultural identities and boost the local creative economy by supporting partnerships between CCI SMEs and other stakeholders. This will also enhance regional tourism and social cohesion through cultural and creative events.
- National public authority: National governments will see the creative industries contribute more significantly to the economy through job creation and regional development. The project can inform national cultural policies, enhance economic growth, and help shape strategic decisions about cultural investments.

- Interest groups including NGOs: NGOs and other culture and creative interest groups will benefit from increased access to creative professionals to support their cultural and social projects. The SEEDS project will provide opportunities for NGOs to collaborate with CCIs to achieve common social, cultural, and environmental goals.
- Higher education and research organisations: Universities and research institutions will have opportunities to collaborate with CCI SMEs, engage in knowledge exchange, and integrate real-world creative industry challenges into their research and teaching. These organizations can also contribute to capacity-building efforts for CCIs.
- Education/training center and school: Education and training institutions will benefit by aligning their curricula with the skills needs of the creative industries, ensuring students are equipped with relevant competencies. They can also offer practical learning opportunities through partnerships with CCI SMEs.
- Enterprise, except SME: Large enterprises will have access to creative services to enhance their branding, marketing, and product development. These companies can benefit from the creative innovation offered by CCIs, particularly in design, digital media, and cultural projects.
- SME: SMEs in the creative industries will gain business development support, market access, and networking opportunities through the SEEDS project. They will benefit from capacity-building programs focused on digitalization, marketing, and entrepreneurship, which will enhance their competitiveness. In particular, SMEs operating in Cultural and Creative sectors, will directly benefit within the SEEDS project, by the new Model of Cultural Governance which will be established, including the CB System for Artistic Distribution and Production. This will apply not only to CCI SMEs of the SEEDS project territories but - considering that the network will be open in the South Adriatic area - also CCIs from the other European countries and regions. This CB System will enable them to cooperate on the market being more competitive. Moreover they will be protagonist of the CCIs Community of Practice, and privileged target group of all the capacity building activities within WP2.
- International organisation, EEIG: International organizations like UNESCO and EEIG will benefit from the SEEDS project by fostering transnational collaborations and promoting cultural exchange across borders. The project aligns with UNESCO's mandate to safeguard and promote cultural diversity, creativity, and heritage. SEEDS will provide a platform for cultural policy innovation, knowledge sharing, and the dissemination of best practices that support the global creative economy. For UNESCO, the project can contribute to the implementation of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, reinforcing the role of the creative industries in sustainable development. It will also allow UNESCO to partner with local and regional stakeholders to strengthen cultural industries in line with its global mission. Additionally, the EEIG can benefit from increased cooperation between European creative industries, enhancing economic opportunities, cross border partnerships, and joint ventures within the EU creative sector. Both UNESCO and EEIG will have access to project results and data that will inform policy and strategic decision-making at the international level, furthering their objectives of fostering creativity, innovation, and cultural growth globally.

## **4.2. Specific work**

The External Technical Assistance will support the Contracting Authority, operating as the Lead Partner in the project implementation from managerial, financial and technical point of view.

### **Project Management**

- Submit the Technical Reporting in Jems system for each semester based in the subsidy contract.
- Project manager is responsibilities to include working group of the project, in the activities in the framework of the project.

- Control the Administrative documents to ensure that are in compliance with Prag rules, and the Programme rules.
- Drafting the procurement procedures for the activities foreseen in the project in accordance with EU rules, (PRAG and programme rules).
- To prepare and report the Technical Reports of the project according to programme rules.
- To maintain regular communication with project partners from Albania, Italy and Montenegro in order to ensure the completion of the project.
- To coordinate and contribute in the organisation of the project activities in Albania and cross-border partners (Italy and Montenegro).
- Support preparation, organization, and documentation of project meetings.
- Ensure timely delivery of project outputs and deliverables.
- Maintain full records of project activities, communications, and decisions.
- Contribute to technical and narrative reports for EU reporting requirements.
- Identify and manage risks and challenges, proposing mitigation strategies / Support risk management and problem-solving.
- Coordinate communication among partners and stakeholders.
- Prepare technical inputs for progress and final reports.
- Maintain documentation and audit trail.
- Maintaining communication with partners or FLCO.
- Any other task that may be assigned by the Contracting Authority, within the framework of the proper implementation of the project, in accordance with the program rules.

### **Financial Management**

- Prepare and Submit the Financial Reporting in Jems system according subsidy contract.
- Prepare and submit the Financial Report at the FLC (First Level Control) for each semester based in the subsidy contract.
- Prepare the staff costs documentation, and reporting the co-financing costs for the Contracting Authority.
- Drafting all the financial documentation for Contracting Authority in the framework of the project, and verify eligibility according to PRAG rules.
- Prepare and submit financial reports, statements, and claims for reimbursement.
- Support project partners with budget planning, cost allocation, and documentation.
- Participate in online and physical meetings/meetings (in Albania / but at the request of the Contracting Authority may also participate in meetings outside Albania, in Italy and Montenegro).
- Ensure audit readiness, liaising with First Level Controllers (FLC) and auditors.
- Maintain a complete audit trail of all costs and supporting documentation.
- Any other task that may be assigned by the Contracting Authority, within the framework of the proper implementation of the project, in accordance with the program rules.

### **4.3. Project management**

#### **4.3.1. Responsible body**

The responsible body for approving the reports and the payments according to the contract, will be the Manager of the Project appointed by / for the Contracting Authority.

#### **4.3.2. Management structure**

By Order of the Minister of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports, an institutional working group has been established for the implementation of the project. This working group is composed of a project manager, a financial manager and a communication manager. The contractor must maintain communication with this working group in order to achieve common objectives within the framework of the implementation of the project.

## **5. LOGISTICS AND TIMING**

### **5.1. Location**

The activities will be carried out in the territory of the Republic of Albania, but since the Contracting Authority is in the capacity of Leader in the "SEEDs" project, the possibility of participation in activities in Italy or Montenegro is not excluded, in special cases at the request of the Contracting Authority..

### **5.2. Start date & period of implementation of tasks**

The intended start date is the date of signing the contract for external expertise from the both parties The contractor and the Contracting Authority, and the period of implementation of the contract will be until the official end of project. Any extension of the project, with the decision of the Managing Authority, will lead to the amendment of this contract, without financial effects.

## **6. REQUIREMENTS**

### **6.1. Personnel**

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 able to provide input 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 on any potential interference or conflict of interest of the proposed expert in his/her function as expert and his/her present or previous functions working as civil servant. Moreover proof should be submitted that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

The selection procedures used by the contractor to select the experts who provide input to the contract must be transparent, must guarantee the absence of professional conflicting interests and the absence of any discrimination based on former or current nationality, gender, place of residence, or any other ground. The findings of the selection panel must be recorded.

All experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they take on.

#### **6.1.1. Experts**

##### **For individual/natural person:**

- Letter of Interest;
- CV of the applicant;
- Copy of the ID of the Applicant;
- Bank account of the Applicant;
- Copy of the degree and other certificates related to the qualifications and skills of the Applicant;
- Signed declaration to the effect that they are not in any of the exclusion situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1. of the PRAG;
- Copy of documents related to previous general and specific experiences of the applicant.

##### **For legal entities:**

- Letter of Interest;
- CV of the Key Expert;
- Copy of the ID of the Key Expert;
- Bank account of the Applicant;

- Copy of the degree and other certificates related to the qualifications and skills of the Key Expert;
- Copy of documents related to previous general and specific experience of the Key Expert;
- Copy of TIN (NIPT);
- Copy of the Statute;
- Copy of the Establishment Act;
- Statements of exclusivity & availability signed by the Key Expert;
- Signed declaration to the effect that they are not in any of the exclusion situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1. of the PRAG.

## **Experts Profile**

### **Qualifications**

- University degree in Economics, Finance, Business Administration, Project Management, Law or related fields;
- Excellent professional proficiency in English (spoken and written).

### **Professional Experience**

- At least 7 years of professional experience in project implementation and financial management;
- Proven experience with EU-funded projects, particularly in Interreg or IPA CBC programmes;
- Strong knowledge of PRAG rules, EU financial regulation, project cycle management, eligibility of costs, and audit procedures;
- Experience in cross-border project coordination;
- Demonstrated ability to prepare technical and financial reports.
- Experience in working with public authorities, cities, metropolitan areas, academic institutions, and international networks;
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in multi-stakeholder environments;

#### **6.1.2. Support facilities & backstopping**

The costs for support facilities, including backstopping, are included in the tenderer's financial offer.

#### **6.2. Office accommodation**

Office accommodation for each expert providing input to the contract is to be provided by the contractor.

#### **6.3. 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.

#### **6.4. Equipment**

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

## 7. REPORTS

### 7.1. Reporting requirements

The contractor will submit the reports needed in Jems system according to the IPA South Adriatic 2021-2027 programme rules and the project requirements.

The contractor shall present to the structure of management body appointed by the Contracting Authority for the project, the following written reports in English language, in 2 (two) original copies:

- **Inception Report** of maximum 12 pages to be produced after 1 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.
- **Monthly progress reports** specifying the needs of the project, progress of the project, proposing solutions to any difficulties or problems related to project implementation etc.
- **Draft final report** that 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 Contracting Authority in the draft report. The deadline for sending the final report is 7 days after receipt of comments on the draft final report. 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.

### 7.2. Submission and approval of reports

The reports of the project referred to above must be submitted to the internal project manager for the institution, appointed by the Contracting Authority. The project manager of the Contracting Authority for the project, is responsible for approving the reports.

## 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### 8.1. Definition of indicators

Monitoring and evaluation will be based on indicators that measure project progress and achievement of results. These will cover activity outputs, capacity improvements, cross-border cooperation, and the project's impact on the cultural and creative sector and tourism. Assessment will rely on project reports, official documents, and participant feedback to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

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