

Terms of Reference

Request for Services

Senior expert for External Evaluation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy (2023-2030) and its Action Plan (2023-2026) of the Republic of North Macedonia

Background

Public administration reform, alongside the rule of law and economic reforms, represents one of the three key pillars in the European Union enlargement process. It remains a core element of the EU's engagement with candidate and potential candidate countries, aimed at ensuring effective, accountable, and transparent governance systems capable of implementing the acquis and delivering quality services to citizens and businesses. In this context, the Government of North Macedonia has placed public administration reform high among its strategic priorities, with the vision of establishing a professional, accountable, and citizen-oriented public administration that efficiently delivers services, ensures openness and integrity, and possesses the necessary institutional capacities to meet EU accession requirements. The Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023 – 2030 was adopted on 11 July 2023, after a series of consultative meetings with external stakeholders such as representatives from the civil society, international community, trade unions, and other partners. In line with SIGMA principles, the Strategy categorizes all measures in four strategic priority areas: Policy Development and Coordination; Public Service and Human Resource Management; Responsibility, Accountability and Transparency; and Service Delivery and Digital Transformation.

There are four main objectives linked to each priority:

- Effective, efficient, transparent, inclusive and evidence-based policy development: (A consistent and functional policy development and legal drafting system is established; Increased transparency, inclusiveness and participation in the policy development and legal drafting process).
- Expert and professional administration free from political influence: (Depoliticization of the public administration; Professionalisation of the public administration; Ensuring quality and expertise of the public administration; Establishing a unified and coherent salary system in the public service).
- Responsible, accountable and transparent work of the institutions: (Coherent and optimised state administration; Improved efficiency of administrative procedures; Strengthened integrity of institutions; Increased transparency of institutions at the state and local level; Creating a favourable environment for the use of public sector data).
- Digitalized public administration: (Digital environment for better functioning of the administration; Increased quality and accessibility to services).

In view of the EC reports, North Macedonia remains moderately prepared in the area of public administration reform. Although the strategic framework for public administration is in place

and the quality and scope of the 2023-2030 public administration strategy is adequate, its implementation still requires improvement. Also, the coordination between the MPA and the Ministry of Finance remains weak. MPA's capacity to steer the reforms at the technical level was slightly affected by reorganization and insufficient human resources. Overall, further efforts, more technical staff and increased cooperation among relevant institutions are needed to ensure that the monitoring and management structures established by the PAR strategy and Public Finance Management (PFM) programmes function effectively. Additionally, SIGMA measurement report 2024 provides in-debt assessment per area and comparison of the status with the one in 2021.

The Strategy envisages an independent evaluation of its implementation, mid-term and final evaluation. The former would produce recommendations to inform the Action plan of the PAR Strategy 2027 – 2030 and to ensure the continuation of the process and prevent a potential gap. To date, no independent evaluations have been made. An independent evaluation has been recognized as a key priority of MPA activities, as the preparation of the next Action plan is planned for 2026.

Description of the assignment

The aim of the evaluation is to provide a combined mid-term and ex-post review of the level of implementation of the PAR Strategy 2023 – 2030. The proposed evaluation will serve as a basis for the forthcoming preparation of the new Action Plan 2027-2030 for the current Strategy and, at the same time, will make decision-makers aware of the actual progress in achieving the set PAR objectives, including an assessment supported by data on the set indicators.

The evaluation will focus on assessing the level of implementation in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, and on how these could be improved. The ultimate objective is hence to contribute to improving the PAR strategic and operational framework in North Macedonia through well-targeted findings and recommendations. The general evaluation framework should revolve on standard DAC OECD evaluation criteria, correlated by the set of indicators defined in the AP. Applying an outcome-based approach (effectiveness) will allow to identify whether results have been achieved and to what extent. The Evaluation Report should incorporate an analysis of progress towards the vision and set objectives in the Strategy, as well as completed, ongoing, and future actions.

The overall objective (OO) of the Evaluation is to assess the level of implementation of the PAR Strategy 2023 – 2030 and its Action Plan, to contribute to the improvement of the PAR strategic and operational framework in North Macedonia with well-targeted findings and recommendations.

The Specific objectives (Sos) of the Evaluation are:

- SO1 - is to collect and provide available evidence that will enable an assessment on how well the PAR Strategy 2023 – 2030 has worked so far, taking into account the intervention logic, and whether the activities and outputs triggered by the Strategy are on course to achieve the objectives.
- SO2 - Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact (DAC Criteria) of the PAR Strategy 2023 – 2030 and its Action Plan, and generate specific and actionable recommendations based on the evaluation findings

→ SO3 – assess the relevance and the adequacy of the defined indicators and provide recommendations on better definition of indicators

Tasks and responsibilities

2.1. Expected Results to be Achieved by the Contractor

In line with the overall purpose, the final evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coherence of the Strategy and its implementation mechanisms. The contractor is expected to deliver the following results:

→ **Evaluation Methodology**

The methodological approach and evaluation matrix (the questionnaire) should be prepared and approved in the first month of the commencement date of the mission, in order to define and clarify the methodology based on a more in-depth discussion of the requirements, such as the availability of information, an updated timetable of implementation, and division of tasks among experts. The methodology will also propose a draft outline of the Reports, including Headings and descriptions of the information in each chapter/subchapter. This document should also be approved by the Beneficiary

→ **Draft Evaluation Report**

The evaluation report will specifically answer each of the evaluation questions agreed in the inception phase and meet all the specific objectives and requested services. Despite that the content of the report is a subject of approval by the Beneficiary (please see the previous output), the report should include at least: an executive summary, main section, conclusions, recommendations and annexes

→ **Final Evaluation Report**

The evaluation will be evidence-based and structured around a non-experimental mixed method, combining quantitative and qualitative data. It will be guided by evaluation questions (EQ) as per the evaluation criteria. The target groups of the field research and primary data collection will be defined by MPA.

→ **Draft Action plan (2027-2030)**, with steps, deadlines, institutional structure, comprehensive analysis of the problems, and identified priorities

→ **Recommendations for capacity building of the strategic and technical operational framework for PAR**

The main analytical tools will consist of relevant documentation assessment (desk research), and stakeholder consultations (field phase). The stakeholder consultations should be conducted in an evaluation workshop, organized in close cooperation with the MPA Team. Additionally, the evaluator may propose using online surveys, individual interviews, and consultations with the focus groups. The evaluators should also focus on the comprehensive study of the indicators included in the strategy. A working group will be formed in MPA, to support the work of the expert. The entire work shall be aligned with the Methodological approach proposed by the expert at the very beginning of the evaluation.

The following approach is proposed:

1. Inception phase

The inception phase will include the drafting of the methodology and discussion with the MPA team on the EQs and judgement criteria to ensure that the scope of the analysis meets their

actual needs. An updated timeline and confirmation of the required documents and their availability will also be included.

2. Desk Research

Once the methodological approach is confirmed, the Expert will carry out with data collection activities from both primary and secondary sources. The desk research phase will consist of identification of quantifiable information from existing documents as well as other secondary information sources, needed to answer the EQs elaborated in the evaluation matrix. The evaluation matrix will be developed comprehensively after the methodology is confirmed.

3. Field research

In the field phase research methods such as workshop, interviews, online questionnaire, and/or online focus groups will be used. When and if necessary, the evaluator will use the one-to-one method of selected cases (to validate key challenges).

4. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis

Under this phase, the expert will examine the data and information collected under the desk and field research stage. This phase will include analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. As for quantitative data, the expert will mainly use the Monitoring reports and all other relevant documents identified during the desk phase. As for qualitative data, information extracted from workshops, surveys, and interviews will be examined.

5. Synthesis and reporting

Based on the findings, this phase will ensure triangulation of information according to two core perspectives: (i) the evaluation questions set in the evaluation matrix, and (ii) the specific objectives of the PAR strategy. The synthesis and reporting phase will be a desk-based exercise undertaken by the experts which will lead to the preparation of the final report. Once completed, the report will be presented to MPA at a formal debriefing meeting.

2.2 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria and methods have been defined as follows:

- Relevance (Mapping of stakeholders; Systematic review of documentation using structural tools; Mapping of available contextual analyses, including those related to the target areas within the Public Administration Reform Strategy; Development of a timeline, including key decision points; Technical analysis and examination of the Strategy; Semi-structured interviews with staff of the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Strategy; and Online survey if needed).
- Effectiveness (Structured analysis of documentation related to the five specific objectives under which interventions are implemented; Analysis of performance data from the PARS monitoring and reporting system; Mapping of conducted risk analyses/applied mitigation measures; Semi-structured interviews with MPA staff and other stakeholders involved in Strategy implementation; Online survey (if needed); and Partial contribution analysis to determine progress toward intended results and established pathways).

- Efficiency and Fitness for Purpose (Systemic analysis of governance and coordination structures; Systemic analysis of strategic approaches; Financial analysis of expenditure by strategy/intervention; Analysis of performance data from the PARS monitoring and reporting system; Semi-structured interviews with MPA staff and other stakeholders involved in Strategy implementation).
- Sustainability (Systematic review of documentation using structural tools; Semi-structured interviews with MPA staff and other stakeholders involved in Strategy implementation; and Online survey (if needed))
- Impact (Systematic review of documentation using structural tools; Analysis of performance data from the PARS monitoring and reporting system; Analysis of national indicator data; Semi-structured interviews with MPA staff and other stakeholders involved in Strategy implementation; and Online survey (if needed)).
- Coherence (Systematic review of documentation using structural tools; Analysis of performance data from the PARS monitoring and reporting system; Analysis of national indicator data; Semi-structured interviews with MPA staff and other stakeholders involved in Strategy implementation; and Online survey (if needed)).

Necessary Qualifications, Experience and Skills

General experience, qualifications and skills:

- University degree in public administration, public policy, political science, economics, law, or another field relevant to the assignment;
- Minimum of 10 years of professional experience in the field of public administration reform;
- Proven experience in the evaluation of public policies or strategic documents, including familiarity with evaluation methodologies (OECD/DAC criteria, SIGMA Principles, results-based management, theory of change, etc.);
- Fluency in English (written and oral); knowledge of the Macedonian language will be considered a strong asset;
- Full computer literacy and proven ability to use data analysis, visualization, and reporting tools

Specific experience, qualifications and skills:

- At least 5 years of direct experience in the design, implementation, monitoring, or evaluation of public administration reform strategies, governance reforms, or institutional capacity-building programs;
- Demonstrated experience with EU accession processes and familiarity with SIGMA Principles of Public Administration and the European Commission's PAR assessment frameworks;
- Proven record in conducting or leading evaluations of national strategies, sectoral reform programs, or institutional performance reviews, ideally for government bodies or international organizations;
- Experience with stakeholder engagement, including facilitating workshops, consultations, or validation events with public institutions, local authorities, civil society, and development partners;
- Understanding of the North Macedonia national planning and policy coordination system, or that of similar EU candidate countries;

Desirable / Advantageous Experience

- Prior experience working with or for institutions such as SIGMA/OECD, the European Commission, UNDP, the World Bank, or EU-funded PAR projects;
- Experience in the Western Balkans region or in transition and EU candidate countries;

Timing and Location

The assignment duration is June to October 2026. The maximum input of the Expert is up to 20 working days. All requested services will be delivered in North Macedonia and will be home-based.

Timeline (indicative only)

Time period	Description
June – July 2026	Inception phase - preparation, team meetings, and agreeing on the methodology and the evaluation matrix (reflecting the DAC criteria and Action Plan indicators). Preparation of evaluation tools (summation and confirmation). Desk research phase with the collection of data
July – September 2026	Field work phase: First workshop (Presentation of the approach, group work, and discussion on the achievements per Evaluation questions Quantitative and qualitative data/document analysis phase and interviews with beneficiaries. Draft final evaluation report and draft new Action plan, completed and submitted for comments. Second workshop (Feedback and comments on the draft documents)
September – October 2026	Finalization of the comments on the draft final evaluation report. Submission of the final report with draft new Action plan for approval.

Note:

The first workshop will serve as a starting point for the field phase. It will be a fast and effective way to elicit information and perspective from a variety of key informants simultaneously. It will simulate a focus group discussion, which is a standard evaluation tool. The discussion will be facilitated by the expert, and the participants will be selected by MPA. This workshop will bring together up to 30 participants.

The second workshop will focus on validating the findings and recommendations. Special focus should be placed on lessons learned, which should be incorporated into the preparation of the next AP of the Strategy. A draft version of the new Action Plan of the Strategy should be produced as the outcome of this workshop. This workshop should be a 2-day event with around 20-25 participants.

Remuneration

The assignment foresees the engagement of up to 20 (twenty) expert days, totalling to 8.000,00 EUR.

The payment will be made in one instalment upon completion of the assignment. The final outputs will be subject to ReSPA's approval before payment is executed.

Note: No other costs will be covered except the expert's daily rate.

Reporting and Final Documentation

The expert/company will be requested to deliver the following documents before the payment is conducted:

Outputs

- Final Report with key conclusions and recommendations
- Executive summary (up to 4 pages)

Documents required for payment

- Invoice (signed original);
- Timesheets (signed original);
- Final brief report on the assignment