



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Project

**“INCREASED COMPETITIVENESS OF SMES THROUGH VALID SUSTAINABILITY
REPORTING”**

“CRSD@SME”

“External expertise for organisation of regional and interregional dissemination events”



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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Partner country

Regional Council of Vlora

1.2 Contracting authority

Regional Council of Vlora

Country background

In **Albania**, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute the backbone of the national economy, representing the majority of registered businesses and playing a key role in employment, local development, and regional competitiveness. The Albanian SME sector is predominantly composed of micro and small enterprises, often characterised by limited administrative capacity, low levels of digitalisation, and constrained access to specialised expertise in regulatory compliance and sustainability management. In recent years, Albania has progressively aligned its legislative and policy framework with European Union standards as part of the EU integration process. This alignment includes increasing attention to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles and the gradual incorporation of sustainability considerations into national development strategies and business support policies. However, the introduction of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) at EU level presents new indirect challenges for Albanian SMEs, particularly those operating within EU value chains or collaborating with EU-based companies. Public authorities and SME support institutions at national and regional level face the need to strengthen their capacities in order to interpret CSRD requirements, translate them into practical guidance, and integrate sustainability reporting considerations into existing policy instruments. Within this context, Albania's participation in the CRSD@SME project provides an opportunity to enhance institutional knowledge, improve policy coordination, and adopt tested approaches from other European regions, ensuring that SMEs are better prepared for future sustainability and reporting requirements.

Current situation in the sector

The current SME support ecosystem in **Albania** is undergoing gradual transformation in response to evolving European sustainability policies and market requirements. While national and regional institutions have increased their focus on entrepreneurship support, competitiveness, and innovation, sustainability reporting and structured ESG integration remain at an early stage, particularly among small and micro-enterprises. Most Albanian SMEs are not directly subject to the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD); however, they are increasingly affected indirectly through supply-chain requirements, contractual obligations with EU-based partners, and growing expectations from financial institutions and investors. As a result, SMEs face rising demands for data collection, transparency, and compliance, often without having adequate internal systems, methodologies, or trained personnel.



At institutional level, public authorities and intermediary organisations providing business support are still developing the tools and capacities required to address these emerging needs. Existing policy instruments related to SME development, innovation, and competitiveness do not yet systematically integrate sustainability reporting or CSRD-related guidance.

Coordination between policy makers, support agencies, and the business community remains fragmented, limiting the effectiveness of existing measures. Within this context, there is a clear need to strengthen institutional frameworks, enhance knowledge transfer, and adapt policy instruments in order to support SMEs in anticipating and responding to sustainability reporting requirements. The CRSD@SME project addresses these gaps by facilitating policy learning, exchange of good practices, and the development of practical, scalable approaches tailored to regional and national contexts.

Related programmes and other donor activities

The assignment is closely linked with other EU-funded initiatives operating in the field of transport, mobility, capacity building and institutional strengthening. Albania participates in multiple Interreg, IPA III and cross-border programmes where similar financial and administrative procedures are applied, such as Interreg IPA Adriion, Interreg IPA Italy–Albania–Montenegro and Interreg Europe. Lessons learned from these programmes have demonstrated the importance of robust financial management systems, unified filing procedures, and systematic expenditure verification.

2. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

2.1 Overall objective

The overall objective of this assignment is to provide external expertise for the organisation and implementation of **eight (8) regional and interregional dissemination events** within the framework of the CRSD@SME project, implemented under the **Interreg Europe Programme**, in compliance with the applicable PRAG rules, programme requirements, and contractual provisions.

2.2 Specific objective(s)

- To ensure the timely and coordinated organisation and implementation of eight (8) regional and interregional dissemination events in accordance with the project schedule and applicable contractual provisions;.
- To ensure effective dissemination of project-related information in compliance with the communication and visibility requirements of the **Interreg Europe Programme**;
- To facilitate the smooth logistical and administrative execution of the events in line with the applicable contractual and procedural rules.

2.3 Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor

a) **Eight (8) dissemination events** (regional and interregional) organised and implemented in accordance with the approved project schedule, including:

- venue arrangement and logistical coordination;



- on-site organisational support;
- **provision and coordination of coffee breaks** for each event, in line with the event agenda and in compliance with applicable procurement, budgetary, and eligibility rules of the **Interreg Europe Programme**;

b) **Event agendas and programmes** prepared in advance and approved by the Contracting Authority for each event;

c) **Participants' lists and attendance records** for each event, duly completed and validated;

d) **Dissemination and visibility materials** for each event, produced in compliance with the communication and visibility requirements of the Programme;

e) **Photographic documentation and evidence of implementation** for each event; and

f) **Brief event reports** submitted in accordance with the contractual reporting requirements.

3. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

3.1 Assumptions underlying the project

- the CRSD@SME project activities, timeline, and budget are implemented as approved under the Interreg Europe Programme;
- the Contracting Authority ensures timely coordination, approvals, and access to relevant project information required for the organisation of dissemination events;
- relevant stakeholders at regional, national, and interregional level are available and willing to participate in the dissemination events; and
- no major external factors (including force majeure, public health restrictions, or regulatory changes) occur that would significantly affect the organisation and delivery of the planned events..

3.2 Risks

The risks that could affect the successful and timely completion of the project are:

- Incorrect partnerships;
- Poor communication with and between partners;
- Unexpected changes in the subsidy contract.
- No funds available



4. SCOPE OF THE WORK

1.3.1 Description of the assignment

The contractor shall be responsible for the practical organisation of the events, including logistical arrangements, coordination with the Contracting Authority and relevant stakeholders, and the provision of on-site organisational support. The assignment includes the preparation of event-related documentation, dissemination and visibility materials, participant management, and the provision of coffee breaks, in accordance with the approved project schedule.

1.3.2 Geographical area to be covered

Vlora Region

1.3.3 Target groups

- The public local and regional authorities
- Stakeholders

Specific work

Under this assignment, the contractor shall carry out the following specific work:

- a) plan, organise, coordinate, and implement eight (8) regional and interregional dissemination events in accordance with the approved project timetable;
- b) liaise with the Contracting Authority and relevant stakeholders to ensure proper coordination and timely execution of the events;
- c) arrange venues and provide logistical support, including on-site coordination and the provision of coffee breaks;
- d) prepare event agendas, programmes, and dissemination materials in compliance with the communication and visibility requirements of the **Interreg Europe Programme**;
- e) manage participant registration and attendance, including the preparation of participants' lists; and
- f) document the implementation of the events and submit the required deliverables and reports in accordance with the contractual provisions.

4.3.1 Responsible body

Administrative staff of Regional Council of Vlora, including the Directory of Finance, Economic and Social Development and the Directory of Land Management and Protection

4.2.2 Management structure

The project is managed through a Project Management Unit (PMU) including a Project Manager, Financial Manager, administrative staff and Steering Group representatives.



- The **Project Manager** supervises implementation and reviews contractor outputs.
- The **Steering Group** reviews progress and validates major deliverables.
- The contractor reports directly to the Project Manager.

1.3.4 Facilities to be provided by the contracting authority and/or other parties

The Contracting Authority will provide access to project documents, templates, working space, institutional data, coordination support and necessary communication channels.

4 LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Location

The activities will take place in Region of Vlora.

Start date & period of implementation of tasks

The intended commencement date is January 2026 and the period of implementation of the contract will be of implementation of the contract will be 24 month

5 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.



These Terms of Reference contain expert profiles and the tenderer shall submit CVs and Declaration for the consultants.

5.2.1 Experts

The expert who will implement this contract is referred to a Company or Natural Person who will organize the Eight (8) dissemination events

5.2.1.1 Additional advantageous qualifications

This assignment will require an expert who has to possess the following minimum requirements. The expert should demonstrate through his /her Cv the following combination of qualification skills knowledge and professional experience :

- Organizations of several events
- Public relations
- Photo video record service

General professional experience

- He/She is expected to have experience in working with events and workshops.
- Able to carry out his/her work in an organized manner

Specific professional experience

- Professionalism –Strong knowledge of the field of expertise with good analytical skills and ability to organize participatory processes
- Planning and Organizing events-Ability to plan work and manage conflicting priorities
- To have licence in National Business Center

1.3.5 Support facilities & backstopping

The contractor must provide adequate administrative support, equipment, and backstopping, ensuring that experts can work efficiently and deliver all outputs on time.

Office accommodation

N/A

Equipment

No equipment will be purchased under this contract.



6 REPORTS

N/A

7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- N/A

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