TERMS OF REFERENCE

Final External Evaluation

LENS – Local CSOs Empowered, Networked and Strengthened for Active Budget Monitoring

Programme	EU4CS – Support to existing and newly established Civil Society Organisations' networks
Call reference	EuropeAid/176421/DD/ACT/BA
Lot	Lot 2 – Support to CSOs networks and cooperation in the area of anti-corruption
Lead applicant / Contracting entity	Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), Bosnia and Herzegovina
Consortium	CIN, GEA and Futura
Action duration	36 months
Type of assignment	Final independent external evaluation
Place of performance	Bosnia and Herzegovina; desk-based work and field/online consultations as appropriate
Indicative assignment period	December 10, 2026 – January 20, 2027

1. Background and context

The LENS Action is financed under the European Commission call EU4CS – Support to existing and newly established Civil Society Organisations' networks, Lot 2: Support to CSOs networks and cooperation in the area of anti-corruption. The lead applicant is the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), working with GEA and Futura.

The Action responds to persistent weaknesses in budget transparency, public participation and accountability in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), particularly at local level. It is designed around the premise that stronger civil society monitoring, evidence-based advocacy, investigative journalism, accessible budget data and constructive dialogue with public authorities can contribute to more transparent and accountable use of public funds.

1.1 Overall and specific objectives

Overall objective:

Contribute to the fight against corruption by enhancing monitoring of budget spending and use of public funds on local level through active involvement of civil society in BiH.

Specific objectives:

1. Providing and promoting solutions for improving dialogue between local governments and CSOs.
2. Increased CSOs capacities for budget monitoring and advocating on local level.
3. Fostered partnership between media and CSO sector in promoting budget transparency.
4. Information Dissemination and Advocacy.

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1.2 Main work packages and expected results

Component	Evaluation-relevant scope
WP1 – Comprehensive research on proactive budget transparency	Research covering local governments; stakeholder interviews; benchmarking toolkit/scorecard; investigative stories; policy recommendations and public dissemination.
WP2 – Capacity building for CSOs	Five training modules on budget monitoring and advocacy, supported by needs assessment, pre/post assessment and participant/trainer feedback.
WP3 – Small Grants Programme	Preparatory training and financial support to third parties for locally rooted budget-monitoring and advocacy initiatives, with mentoring and monitoring.
WP4 – Online Database / Platform	A user-friendly repository and data resource for budget monitoring, with launch, promotion, maintenance and updating.
WP5 – Advocacy and media campaign	Communication, advocacy, media production, events and final presentation of project results.

The proposal identifies, inter alia, the following intended results: policy recommendations advocated through the CSO network and engagement of up to 50 key stakeholders; public awareness on CSO participation in budget monitoring; innovative educational programmes and a 20% increase in participating CSO representatives' knowledge; up to 10 local advocacy activities/campaigns; increased participation of CSOs in advocating for change; and a broad media campaign intended to reach at least 1.5 million people.

The Action is implemented over 36 months, with an inception phase (months 1–6), implementation phase (months 7–30) and wrap-up phase (months 31–36), which includes the final conference, evaluation and reporting.

2. Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

The purpose of the assignment is to provide CIN, its partners, the European Union and relevant stakeholders with an independent, evidence-based assessment of the design, implementation, results and likely sustainability of the LENS Action, and to identify lessons and actionable recommendations for future programming.

The final evaluation shall:

- assess the relevance and continued validity of the Action's intervention logic in the BiH context;
- assess achievement of objectives, results, outputs and indicators against the approved Description of Action/logframe and subsequent approved amendments;
- examine the efficiency and quality of implementation, partnership arrangements, monitoring and use of resources;
- assess the contribution of the Action to strengthened CSO capacity, local budget monitoring, evidence-based advocacy, dialogue and public awareness;
- assess the quality, usability, uptake and sustainability prospects of the research, benchmarking toolkit and online database/platform;
- assess the effectiveness and added value of the Small Grants Programme, including capacity development and local advocacy results;
- assess the contribution and reach of investigative journalism, communication and advocacy activities;
- identify intended and unintended effects, good practices, constraints and lessons learned;
- assess sustainability, ownership, replication and continuation prospects after EU financing ends; and
- provide prioritised, feasible recommendations addressed to CIN, consortium partners and, where relevant, other stakeholders.

3. Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation shall cover the full 36-month implementation period, the entire geographic scope of the Action in Bosnia and Herzegovina, all five work packages, the consortium management arrangements, financial support to third parties, and the principal target groups and beneficiaries.

The evaluator shall consider at minimum:

- CIN, GEA and Futura as implementing partners;
- participating and network CSOs, including Small Grant beneficiaries and relevant applicants/participants where useful;
- local governments and other public institutions engaged by the Action;
- APIK and other anti-corruption actors, where relevant;
- training participants and trainers;
- users and intended users of the online database/platform and benchmarking toolkit;
- journalists/media and audiences reached through investigative and communication activities; and
- available monitoring, financial, communication, visibility and results data.

The evaluation is a performance and results evaluation. It is not an audit or expenditure verification. Nevertheless, the evaluator should assess cost-effectiveness and implementation efficiency using available programme and financial information without duplicating the work of auditors.

3.1 Institutional beneficiaries and engagement

The evaluation shall examine the depth, continuity and results of engagement with key public institutions, including the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and Coordination of the Fight against Corruption (APIK), relevant entity-level anti-corruption bodies, ministries and public institutions responsible for public finance management, and local administrative actors involved in budget preparation, adoption, implementation and reporting. The evaluator shall distinguish attendance or consultation from substantive cooperation, institutional uptake and documented changes in practices.

Institutional stakeholders should be included in the interview sample, subject to documented relevance and accessibility; the evaluator shall identify which institutions were engaged, in what capacity, with what follow-up, and which commitments, if any, were made.

4. Evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions

The evaluation shall be guided by the standard EU/OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, complemented by EU added value, quality of intervention logic and monitoring, cross-cutting issues, communication and visibility. The questions below are indicative; the evaluator shall refine them in the inception phase without changing the substantive scope.

Relevance and design

- To what extent did the Action address the actual needs of grass-root and advocacy-oriented CSOs, local communities and stakeholders concerned with budget transparency?
- How relevant were the objectives and intervention logic to the evolving anti-corruption, public finance management and EU-integration context in BiH?
- Was the design sufficiently evidence-based, realistic and responsive to differences among local governments and CSOs?
- To what extent did the Action build appropriately on the preceding EU-funded budget-monitoring initiative?

Coherence, complementarity and EU added value

- How coherent was LENS internally across research, training, sub-granting, platform, journalism and advocacy components?
- How well did the Action complement relevant public-sector, civil-society, donor and EU initiatives in transparency, anti-corruption and public finance management?
- What added value resulted from EU support and from the consortium model that would have been less likely otherwise?

Effectiveness

- To what extent were planned outputs, results and specific objectives achieved, and what evidence supports the findings?
- To what extent did CSO knowledge, research, monitoring and advocacy capacities improve, including the intended 20% knowledge increase?
- Did trained and sub-granted CSOs apply acquired knowledge in practice and produce credible local monitoring, research, advocacy or dialogue results?
- To what extent did the research, scorecard/toolkit and platform improve access to usable budget information and support evidence-based monitoring or advocacy?
- How effectively did investigative stories and communication activities translate project evidence into public awareness, stakeholder engagement or follow-up?
- To what extent did the Action improve dialogue and cooperation among CSOs, media, local authorities and anti-corruption actors?

Efficiency

- Were activities and outputs delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner relative to the results achieved?
- Were consortium governance, division of responsibilities, coordination, monitoring and decision-making arrangements efficient?
- Were training, research, procurement/contracting, platform development and Small Grant management organised in ways proportionate to their intended results?
- How effectively were implementation challenges and changes in context managed?

Impact / broader effects

- What significant intended or unintended changes can plausibly be associated with or contributed to by LENS?
- Is there evidence of changes in CSO behaviour, local public-sector transparency practices, public debate, stakeholder responsiveness or accountability processes?
- What contribution did the Action make to the broader objective of strengthening monitoring of local public funds and anti-corruption efforts?

Sustainability and multiplier effects

- Which results, capacities, relationships, tools and practices are likely to continue after the Action ends, and why?
- Are the platform/database, toolkit, training materials, CSO network and local advocacy practices institutionally, technically and financially sustainable?
- To what extent has ownership been established among partners, CSOs and relevant institutions?
- What realistic opportunities exist for replication, scaling or integration of LENS approaches into future work?

Cross-cutting issues, communication and visibility

- To what extent were gender equality, inclusion, equal opportunities, non-discrimination and participation of vulnerable groups appropriately considered?
- Were communication and EU visibility measures appropriate, compliant and effective for the intended audiences?

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- Did the Action create accessible feedback mechanisms and use stakeholder feedback to improve implementation?

4.1 Additional questions: institutional engagement and network sustainability

- Effectiveness: Which national, entity and local institutions engaged with LENS, how frequently and through which mechanisms? Did engagement lead to use of evidence, policy dialogue, changes in transparency practices, commitments or joint actions? What barriers prevented stronger institutional involvement?
- Efficiency: Were the consortium's institutional outreach and follow-up mechanisms appropriately coordinated and resourced? Were relevant institutions engaged at stages when their participation could influence decisions?
- Broader impacts: Is there credible evidence that institutional actors incorporated LENS findings, recommendations, tools or approaches into budget processes, anti-corruption work or public finance management? Distinguish commitments from implemented changes.
- Network functioning: Has LENS established a functioning and representative CSO network beyond individual training beneficiaries? Assess membership and geographic/thematic representation, governance, roles, decision-making, frequency of cooperation, joint monitoring and advocacy, information sharing and evidence of collective action.
- Network independence and sustainability: Could the network continue to operate without CIN coordination or additional EU funding? Assess leadership, member ownership, coordination arrangements, financial and non-financial resources, a realistic continuation plan and alternative support mechanisms.
- Platform and database uptake: Who is expected to own, host, finance, technically maintain, quality-assure and update the platform/database after project closure? Verify written responsibilities, agreements, budgets, staffing, technical access and commitments; identify gaps and risks.
- Strategic communication: To what extent was communication used not only for visibility and reach but also to build network identity, strengthen institutional uptake, influence policy debate and mobilise sustained participation? What evidence demonstrates such effects?

5. Methodology

Tenderers shall propose a robust mixed-method approach. The selected evaluator will finalise the methodology in the inception phase in consultation with CIN while retaining full independence over findings and conclusions. The evaluation must triangulate evidence and clearly distinguish verified results, stakeholder perceptions and evaluator judgement.

- Desk review of the Grant Contract/Description of Action, logical framework, amendments, narrative reports, monitoring data, research products, training documentation, Small Grant files and reports, platform analytics, investigative stories, communication/visibility evidence and relevant financial information.
- Reconstruction/review of the intervention logic and an evaluation matrix linking questions, judgement criteria, indicators, sources and methods.
- Semi-structured interviews with consortium staff and key external stakeholders.
- Interviews and/or focus groups with a purposive and geographically balanced sample of participating CSOs, Small Grant beneficiaries, local authorities and other relevant actors.
- Review of pre/post training assessments and participant feedback, with analysis of evidence of application of learning.
- Assessment of the online database/platform, including functionality, usability, data coverage, uptake/analytics, maintenance arrangements and sustainability.
- Review of investigative stories and campaign outputs, including available reach, engagement, republication and stakeholder-response data.
- Case studies of a small number of local interventions/sub-grants selected to reflect geographic, thematic and performance diversity.

- Validation/debriefing of preliminary findings with CIN and partners, without compromising evaluator independence.

5.1 Sampling and evidence standards

The evaluator shall propose a transparent sampling strategy. The sample should be sufficient to capture variation by geography, type of CSO, type of intervention and level of performance. Findings shall not be generalised beyond the strength of the evidence. All major conclusions must be supported by triangulated evidence. Limitations, data gaps and potential biases must be explicitly stated.

5.2 Ethics, confidentiality and data protection

The evaluator shall apply professional evaluation ethics, informed consent, confidentiality and data-minimisation principles. Personal data obtained during the assignment shall be processed only for the purposes of the evaluation and in accordance with applicable contractual and legal requirements. Sensitive information and interview notes shall be securely handled and shall not be disclosed without authorisation.

5.3 Mandatory indicator verification matrix

The evaluator shall prepare a complete indicator verification matrix using the latest approved logical framework and amendments. For every indicator at impact, outcome and output levels, record the approved baseline and target, latest reported achievement, reporting date, primary and secondary sources of evidence, verification method, evaluator-verified achievement, assessment of evidence reliability (high/medium/low with explanation), discrepancies or data gaps, and an overall judgement on achievement. Missing data must be shown as “not available” rather than inferred. The matrix shall be annexed to the final report and key findings summarised in its body.

6. Deliverables

Deliverable	Indicative deadline	Minimum content
1. Inception report	Within [5] working days of contract start	Refined methodology; evaluation matrix; stakeholder map; sampling plan; work plan; interview guides; data needs; risks/limitations.
2. Preliminary findings / debrief	After data collection	Concise presentation to CIN/partners highlighting emerging findings, evidence gaps and issues requiring verification.
3. Draft final evaluation report	Within [25–30] calendar days of contract start	Complete draft including executive summary, methodology, findings by criterion, conclusions, lessons and prioritised recommendations.
4. Final evaluation report	Within [5] working days of consolidated comments	Revised report addressing factual/quality comments, with an audit trail or response matrix explaining treatment of comments.
5. Executive summary	With final report	Standalone 3–5 page summary suitable for sharing with the EU and stakeholders.

Unless otherwise agreed, deliverables shall be submitted electronically in English in editable and PDF formats. The final report should normally not exceed 40 pages excluding annexes. Annexes should include the evaluation matrix, list of documents reviewed, list of stakeholders consulted (subject to confidentiality), tools used and relevant data tables.

7. Indicative timetable and level of effort

The assignment is expected to be completed within approximately 30–40 calendar days from contract signature. Tenderers shall propose the number of working days necessary to deliver the assignment and provide a breakdown by task. An indicative level of effort of 15–20 expert working days may be used for planning purposes, subject to the final procurement dossier and budget.

Milestone	Indicative timing
Contract signature / kick-off	Day 0
Document review and inception	Days 1–5
Interviews, focus groups, case studies and data analysis	Days 6–20
Preliminary debrief	Around Day 20
Draft report	Around Day 25–30
CIN/partner consolidated comments	Within 5 working days
Final report and executive summary	Within 5 working days after comments

8. Management and coordination

CIN will act as the contracting entity and principal contact for the evaluator. CIN will facilitate access to project documentation and support scheduling of interviews, while the evaluator remains responsible for the methodology, independent analysis and professional judgement. Consortium partners will provide relevant documentation and access to stakeholders within their areas of responsibility.

Comments by CIN and partners on draft deliverables will focus on factual accuracy, completeness and usability. The evaluator is not required to alter independent findings or conclusions merely because stakeholders disagree with them.

9. Required profile of the evaluator / evaluation team

The assignment may be undertaken by an individual expert or a team. The lead evaluator should demonstrate:

- University degree in social sciences, economics, public administration, development studies, evaluation or another field relevant to the assignment; an advanced degree is an asset.
- At least 7 years of relevant professional experience, including substantial experience in evaluation of donor-funded programmes/projects.
- Demonstrated experience with EU-funded external-action/IPA projects and results-based management/logframe approaches.
- Experience evaluating civil society capacity development, governance, anti-corruption, public finance/budget transparency, advocacy, media or closely related interventions.
- Experience with mixed-method evaluation, stakeholder interviewing, qualitative analysis and assessment of quantitative monitoring data.
- Knowledge of the institutional and civil-society context of Bosnia and Herzegovina and/or the Western Balkans.
- Excellent analytical and report-writing skills in English. Knowledge of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian is a strong asset and should be available within the team if extensive stakeholder consultations are conducted locally.
- Demonstrated independence, impartiality and absence of conflicts of interest.

Tenderers may propose additional experts where this improves the methodology, provided roles and inputs are clearly defined and the proposed arrangement remains cost-effective.

10. Independence and conflict of interest

The evaluator must be independent of the design and implementation of LENS and must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest. A person or entity that has had a role capable of compromising independent assessment of the Action shall not be engaged for this evaluation. The selected evaluator shall sign any declaration of impartiality/confidentiality required by the applicable procurement procedure.

11. Tender submission requirements

The tender/application should contain, at minimum:

- Technical offer describing understanding of the assignment, proposed methodology, sampling approach, work plan and quality-assurance arrangements.
- CV(s) of the proposed evaluator(s), clearly demonstrating compliance with the required profile.
- At least two examples/references for comparable evaluation assignments, preferably including EU-funded actions.
- Financial offer stating the total fee and, where requested, a breakdown of expert days, daily rates and reimbursable costs.
- Signed declaration(s) on honour, independence/conflict of interest, exclusion/eligibility and other documentation required by the applicable procurement dossier.
- Availability statement confirming ability to complete the assignment within the required period.
- **Deadline for submission of proposals is November 20, 2026. Proposals submitted after this deadline shall not be considered.**

12. Evaluation of tenders and award criteria

The contract shall be awarded in accordance with the procurement rules applicable to the LENS Grant Contract and the relevant EU external-action/PRAG framework. The procedure must ensure transparency, equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality, sound financial management, avoidance of conflicts of interest and an adequate audit trail.

The following quality/price structure is proposed for the tender dossier and should be confirmed against the signed Grant Contract and applicable procurement annex before publication:

Criterion	Weight	Indicative assessment
Technical quality	80%	Understanding of the ToR and evaluation approach; methodological quality and feasibility; sampling and triangulation; work plan/quality assurance; qualifications and relevant experience of evaluator/team.
Financial offer	20%	Price competitiveness and consistency of the financial offer with the proposed methodology and level of effort.

A minimum technical quality threshold should be specified in the procurement dossier. Only technically compliant offers meeting that threshold should proceed to the price/combined-score stage. The precise scoring formula, threshold, eligibility/exclusion requirements, number of offers to be sought, publication requirements and evaluation committee arrangements must follow the procedure applicable to the actual estimated contract value and the contractual rules in force.

13. PRAG / EU procurement compliance note

This ToR defines the technical requirements of the assignment. It does not by itself determine the procurement procedure. Before launching the procurement, CIN should confirm the applicable procedure and documentary requirements against: (i) the signed LENS Grant Contract and its annexes; (ii) any approved amendments; (iii) the procurement rules applicable to beneficiaries under that contract; and (iv) the version of PRAG/EU external-action rules applicable to the procurement.

- Do not split the estimated value of the service contract in order to avoid a more competitive procedure.
- Prepare and retain a complete procurement file, including market/tender documentation, invitations/publication evidence, offers received, declarations, evaluation records, award decision, notifications and contract.
- Use clear, non-discriminatory and proportionate technical specifications and selection/award criteria announced in advance.
- Ensure evaluators of tenders are impartial and free from conflicts of interest.
- Respect applicable rules on nationality/origin, exclusion, restrictive measures and eligibility where required by the Grant Contract/procedure.
- Ensure the selected offer provides best value for money and that any negotiation or clarification is documented and does not distort equal treatment.
- Use the applicable EU/PRAG templates where the contractual framework requires them.

14. Ownership, confidentiality and use of outputs

All deliverables produced under the assignment shall be made available to CIN for use in project reporting, learning, communication with the European Union and future programming, subject to the intellectual-property provisions of the service contract and the LENS Grant Contract. The evaluator shall not publish or disclose project information or evaluation findings without prior written authorisation from CIN.

15. Documents to be made available to the evaluator

- Signed Grant Contract, Description of Action, logical framework, budget and approved amendments.
- Interim/progress reports, monitoring plans and indicator tracking data.
- Research methodology, comprehensive research report, scorecard/benchmarking toolkit and stakeholder interview records where appropriate.
- Training needs assessment, curricula/materials, attendance records, pre/post assessments and evaluation summaries.
- Small Grants guidelines, selection documentation, contracts, monitoring records and final grantee reports.
- Online platform/database documentation, data coverage information, analytics and maintenance arrangements.
- Investigative stories, dissemination records, media uptake and available audience analytics.
- Communication and visibility plan, campaign outputs, event records and available reach/engagement data.
- Consortium coordination records and other documentation necessary to understand implementation and results.
- Relevant financial information required for the efficiency/cost-effectiveness assessment.

Annex 1. Suggested structure of the final evaluation report

5. Executive Summary
6. Introduction and purpose of the evaluation
7. Description of the LENS Action and intervention logic

8. Evaluation scope and methodology
9. Limitations
10. Findings by evaluation criterion and evaluation question
11. Assessment of achievement against objectives, results and indicators
12. Conclusions
13. Lessons learned and good practices
14. Prioritised recommendations (with addressee and suggested timeframe)
15. Annexes: evaluation matrix, stakeholder list, documents reviewed, tools, data tables and other supporting material

Annex 2. Draft recommendation matrix

No.	Recommendation	Priority	Addressee	Suggested timeframe
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Annex 3. Mandatory indicator verification matrix – template

Indicator (approved logframe)	Baseline	Target	Latest reported achievement / date	Source(s) of evidence	Evaluator-verified result	Evidence reliability and rationale	Assessment / gaps
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Complete one row per approved indicator. Where the indicator wording, baseline or target changed, cite the relevant approved amendment. Assess both reported achievement and the credibility of its supporting evidence.

Annex 4. Suggested institutional and network assessment evidence

- Institutional engagement register: institution, mandate, engagement dates, type of participation, follow-up, evidence of uptake, commitments and status.
- Network assessment: member list and representation; governance and decision-making records; joint activities and advocacy; member feedback; financing and coordination plan.
- Platform sustainability: named owner and hosting entity; maintenance and data-update roles; access/administration arrangements; written agreements; budget and staffing; risk mitigation.

Communication influence: audience segmentation, institutional outreach, uptake of policy recommendations, network mob

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