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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Partner country

< Albania >

## Contracting authority

< Regional Council of Berat >

## Country background

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) sector is very crucial for European Unions’ social and economic development, but also in tackling challenges related to climate change, energy supply, and digitalisation. However, it is one of the sectors where the number of women is disproportionately lower, and this has repercussions at many levels. WeSTEMEU will address this issue and work at interregional level in advancing policy instruments that encourage and facilitate women’s employment in STEM sectors, thus contributing to the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour market, and access to quality employment. Although there are many policies for gender equality, in most of the EU regions there are no specific objectives and actions foreseen for ensuring equal access of women in STEM careers, given the importance of the sector. The project will address this gap in Catalonia (Spain), Lithuania, Bucharest (Romania), Region of Western Greece, Podkarpackie Region (Poland) and Donegal County (Ireland), by facilitating exchange of experience, knowledge, and good practices. As the data for women scientists vary greatly within EU, with some countries having up to 52% and others as low as 23%, the project, will above all seek to learn from the practices of the former and transfer those to the other EU regions. Ultimately, WeSTEMEU will contribute to ameliorating the gender imbalance and thus making the STEM sector more responsive to the social, economic, and environmental needs of both genders. Concurrently, this will give rise to meeting the demands for jobs growth and innovation for sustainable development in the current knowledge-based economy.

Gender balance is of utmost importance for EU’s economy, its principles & values, and is also a matter of social justice for all women & girls choosing a STEM career path. In the last decade, the percentage of women completing their studies in STEM areas in the EU has fallen from 23% to 22%. This gender distribution is reflected in the labour market, where the percentage of women in STEM jobs is only 14%. STEM sector is further seen by the EU as a necessary input for economic and social development in the context of modern knowledge society. By facilitating the entry of more women into the sector, the EU could increase its GDP per capita to 3% in 2050, improving the bloc’s GDP by up to 820 billion € & generating 16 billion euros annually. Redressing the gender imbalance in this sector would also be a good opportunity for women to enter jobs that are more highly paid than those in traditionally female sectors. This would help reduce the persistent gender-based payments.

## Current situation in the sector

WeSTEMEU addresses the issue of gender disparity in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), i.e. the low number of women that pursue careers in these sectors. The project seeks to work at interregional level in advancing policy instruments that encourage and facilitate women’s employment in STEM sectors, thus contributing to the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour market, and access to quality employment. As this sector is highly competitive and a culture of “long working hours” prevails, it’s imperative to also integrate the work-life balance EU directive in these policies, which besides taking in consideration the well-being of both women and men, will also address women’s underrepresentation in the labour market, contribute to improving employment rates and to reducing social exclusion. The project ultimately contributes to social cohesion and is in line with the Commission's priorities of jobs & growth outlined in President Juncker's political guidelines.

The partnership involves 10 partners from 7 countries (Spain, Lithuania, Romania, Greece, Poland, Ireland and Albania). The partnership includes local authorities and development agencies of them and includes also scientific partners. Moreover, all the partners have involved in the project a great number of stakeholders that are related to the STEM sector. The Regional Council of Berat is the last partner that came in the project, and it has the role of the discovery partner.

The project approach has been designed considering the 'policy cycle', which involves problem identification & policy responses formulation, including the appraisal of the different options to move into the selection of the preferred one/s. This consists of Core phase (over a 36-month period) before moving to the Follow up phase (12-month period). Problem identification is based on a preliminary analysis of territorial needs undertaken during the preparation of the WeSTEMEU project, which results in the proposal of an interregional learning process that should be truly relevant to the issue addressed. In this regard, the learning process starts with a more profound needs and problem-analysis, which is based on the following: First, the REGIONAL/NATIONAL CO-ASSESSMENT (ReCA) exercise, actively involving stakeholders in evaluating existing public policies and programmes, persisting difficulties for women in accessing STEM labour market, through RSG workshops. Second, the INTERREGIONAL PEER REVIEW (IPeR) process, drawing on the knowledge of the others PPs' and regional stakeholders' expertise, including targeted STUDY VISITS to participating regions. These activities will take place through the 1st and 2nd year of the project. The result of this needs and problem-analysis process is a comprehensive INTERREGIONAL STUDY focusing on the targeted regions on the difficulties faced and proposing policy measures that could facilitate the entrance of women in STEM labour market, including a shared analysis of gaps, strengths & opportunities for policy change, and good practices identified. The experiences and practices identified will be further studied to determine their value & transfer potential. This appraisal will be undertaken at 2 levels: First, INTERREGIONAL THEMATIC WORKSHOPS (ITW) organised around the themes that will be defined by the partners according with the results of the interregional learning process. Second, RSG Workshops to discuss relevance to the targeted regional settings. PPs will be able to move forward in the learning process, deepening the study of most valuable & transferable policy solutions & Good Practices (GP). This will happen through the 3rd & last year of the Core Phase, where each partner should have already clearly identified the best way forward to improve their policy instrument and the most suitable means to transfer and adopt that solution based on the lessons learned until the moment. Partners will organise exchange activities (with the partner owner of the good practice to be transferred): technical workshops, meetings, staff exchanges are some examples of the types of exchanges partners can choose. A dossier to report on the key-findings should also be produced on these exchange activities. Simultaneously with the implementation of the knowledge and practices transfer processes, the results monitoring process will be put in place, which is explained in the subsequent section. During this phase, the PPs will also evaluate if there is a need for a pilot action to take place in any of the targeted regions.

The Regional Council of Berat (RCB) boasts considerable expertise in driving regional development through long-term strategic planning and effective implementation of economic and social initiatives in the Berat region, Albania. The RCB has demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing gender equality and addressing disparities in STEM fields through several strategic actions. RCB actively supports initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of women in in STEM disciplines. This includes partnerships with educational institutions to provide workshops, career counseling, and mentoring programs specifically designed for young women. RCB also advocates for curriculum changes to incorporate more STEM-related content that is appealing to female students.

As a key regional public authority, RCB facilitates awareness campaigns and community engagement events that highlight successful women in STEM careers. RCB has also sought to address gender disparities in professional environments by supporting policies that promote equal opportunities in hiring, career advancement, and professional development within STEM fields.

RCB's ability to network and collaborate with various stakeholders enhances its capacity to meet regional goals successfully The RCB’s previous involvement in EU funded Interreg projects is quite significant as it has implemented projects that were funded by Interreg EuroMed, Interreg ADRION and Interreg IPA Greece – Albania.

The RCB participates in WeSTEMEU as a Discovery Partner, engaging in several key activities:

1. Interregional Engagement: RCB will attend the upcoming interregional meetings in Ireland, Poland, and Barcelona, participating in thematic workshops, best practices exchanges, and Steering Committee sessions. This involvement will enhance their strategies for fostering women’s presence in STEM through interregional cooperation.

2. Exceptional Stakeholder Meeting: In the 6th semester, RCB will organize a local stakeholder meeting to share insights from the interregional meetings and update on project progress. A Local Assessment Report will be presented, reviewing the state of the art of women employment in STEM disciplines in Berat.

3. Local Assessment Report: RCB will produce a report assessing the current state of women presence STEM disciplines in Berat, outlining existing best practices and potential areas for improvement.

4. Communication Event: Before the final conference in Brussels, RCB will host an event to disseminate project results to public and private actors, fostering community engagement and project legacy.

5. Reporting: RCB is tasked with preparing and submitting detailed financial and policy reports tracking the project’s impact and progress with in the region

## Related programmes and other donor activities

< N/A >

# OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

## Overall objective

WeSTEMEU aims to improve policy instruments related to increasing the number of employed women in STEM sectors, enhancing workplace diversity and job accessibility, in the regions of Catalonia (ES), Lithuania (LT), Bucharest (RO), Western Greece (GR), Podkarpackie (PL) and Donegal (IE). The specific objectives of this project are: To promote interregional exchange of experience, pooling regional knowledge from public policy makers, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders from the public sphere, the private employers and the educational sector, delivering opportunities for mutual learning & joint policy development. To engage in interregional capacity Building, identifying, and sharing good practices, and integrating them to favour increased involvement of women in STEM as per the aims of European Skills Agenda, whilst also considering the Work – Life Balance EU directive. To monitor & evaluate the impact of the progress in policy improvements and their impact.

## Specific objective(s)

The specific objectives and outcomes that will be achieved from WeSTEMEU are expected to be the following:

**Exchange Knowledge Phase (Semester 1 – 6)**

* A REGIONAL/NATIONAL CO-ASSESSMENT (ReCA) exercise, actively involving stakeholders in evaluating existing public policies and programmes, persisting difficulties for women in accessing STEM labour market, through RSG workshops.
* An INTERREGIONAL PEER REVIEW (IPeR) process, drawing on the knowledge of the others PPs' and regional stakeholders' expertise, including targeted STUDY VISITS to participating regions.
* An INTERREGIONAL THEMATIC WORKSHOPS (ITW) organised around the themes that will be defi ned by the partners according with the results of the interregional learning process.
* RSG Workshops to discuss relevance to the targeted regional settings. PPs will be able to move forward in the learning process, deepening the study of most valuable & transferable policy solutions & Good Practices (GP).

**Follow-up Phase (Semester 7 & 8)**

* Online follow-up meetings
* Project results database
* Implementation of the actions plans
* RSG to support in the evaluation of the results & to participate in the exchange activities
* Reports on the measurement of the results achieved by each partner that will follow a common methodology to enable data comparison & must clearly state:
* improvements introduced in the policy instrument.
* improvements achieved through capacity building (specific survey applied to all the participants).
* impact on the beneficiaries of the policy instruments (women in STEM).
* impact on the performance and knowledge of the members of RSG. - other impacts resulting from the project exchange activities

**Communication Activities (horizontally over the whole project duration)**

* Communication Events
* Flyers
* Brochures
* Newsletters
* Participation to sectoral dissemination events
* Press releases

## Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor

The WeSTEMEU project addresses the issue of gender disparity in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) by advancing policy instruments that encourages and facilitate women’s employment in these sectors at regional level.

By means of transnational cooperation involving stakeholders for the STEM sector, the partners of the project will promote an interregional exchange of experience, pooling regional knowledge from public policy makers.

# ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

## Assumptions underlying the project

The main assumptions underlying the project are the following:

* The maturity of the project activities is at satisfactory level. Sufficient capacity of the involved stakeholders and target groups to participate in the project events/activities.
* Previous studies including norms, planning rules, financial and economic incentives, methods of analysis and evaluation of STEM sector in the Berat Region and in country level will be available.
* The proposed strategic road map will be in line with the needs of the stakeholders involved and political support will facilitate the integration of this in the concerned areas.

## Risks

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **Weight** | **Probability of occurrence** | **Mitigation measure** |
| Inability to elaborate the necessary communication means as requested in by the Contract. | High | Low | The contractor is requested to have experience in EU projects. |
| Low capacity of the region and the country to implement the proposed measures-activities. | High | Low | Strong political commitment is in place to meet the sustainable development requirements and impose the necessary measures. |
| Convid19 – New lock Down | High | Medium | A risk assessment plan will be developed, and alternative solutions will be proposed (webinars) for the implementation of the project’s workshops. |
| Low capacity of the involved stakeholders and target groups to participate in the project activities / events. | Medium | Medium | The invitation approach / the communication channels and the agenda of the events will be redesigned. New dates will be chosen, if necessary, to address the requirements of most stakeholders. |
| Possible delays in project implementation | Medium | Medium | The project timetable will be re-designed, if necessary. A prolongation request will be submitted in case of major delays. |

# SCOPE OF THE WORK

## General

### Description of the assignment

The scope of the assignment is to provide integrated consulting support to the Contracting Authority for the implementation of the project deliverables listed in section 4.2.

### Geographical area to be covered

Albania, Region of Berat

### Target groups

* Local public authorities
* Regional public authorities
* National public authorities
* General public
* Sectoral agencies
* Higher education & research
* Education/training centre and schools
* Enterprises & SMEs
* Interest Groups, including NGOs.

## Specific work

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Budget item** | **Del. Num.** | **Deliverable Title** | **Description** | **Delivery date** | **Budget (€)** |
| 38 | 1 | Interregional partner meetings, regional stakeholder group meetings | Support for the organization of a local/regional meeting for experience exchange with stakeholders by the provision of indicative services such as: catering, secretarial support and photographic coverage during the event, information material for the participants e.t.c  A report accompanied from the relevant proof material will be submitted by the contractor | Feb 2026 | 1.000,00€ |
| 39 | 2 | Associated policy responsible authority, stakeholders | The contractor will support the RCB for the participation of the selected local Stakeholder in two project’s events where the 1st will be held on the 5th semester and the second on the 8th semester. The contractor will cover the travel cost of 1-2 stakeholders for each event.  A report accompanied from the relevant proof material will be submitted by the contractor | Feb 2027 | 4.000,00€ |
| 40 | 3 | Local Assessment report on the state of the art of women employment in STEM in the region. | Elaboration of a Local Assessment report on the state of the art of women employment in STEM sector in the region of Berat | Within one month since the singing of the contract | 5.000,00€ |
| 41 | 4 | regional and interregional dissemination events | Support for the organization of a regional info day event by the provision of indicative services such as: catering, secretarial support and photographic coverage during the event, information material for the participants e.t.c  A report accompanied from the relevant proof material will be submitted by the contractor | Feb 2027 | 1.500,00€ |
| 42 | 5 | Project banner, leaflets, roll-up, notepads. | Support to the production of the project’s communication material that will be composed by the following items and quantities:   * One (1) roll up banner * One hundred (100) leaf lets * One hundred (100) notepads * One hundred (100) pens   All the produced communication material must respect the rules imposed by the Interreg Europe programme communication manual | Within one month since the singing of the contract | 1.000,00€ |
| 43 | 6 | Management – external support | The contractor will assist to the overall coordination of the project, the time plan, the submission of the Progress Reports Financial Reports and Policy Reports and the communication with the FLC.  In particular the contractor will:  1. prepare the Progress / Financial Report within one month from the end of each semester according with the instruction of the LP.  2. coordinate the reporting procedure in eMS  3. coordinate of the expense’s certification procedure, communicate with the FLC  4. check that the project implementation is performed according to Interreg Europe programme manual  5. support the MoG during the project’s closure phase | May 2027 | 10.000,00€ |
| 44 | 7 | Local Stakeholder meeting preparation: content, stakeholders' identification, meeting moderation | Support for the organization of a local stakeholders meeting by the provision of indicative services such as: catering, secretarial support, preparation of the meeting’s context, moderation during the meeting and photographic coverage during the meeting e.t.c  A report accompanied from the relevant proof material will be submitted by the contractor | Feb 26 | 2.000,00€ |

## Project management

### Responsible body

Regional Council of Berat

### Management structure

The Regional Council of Berat is a regional public authority which has the capacity to encompass the evolving needs of the region, to stimulate sustainable development and to promote social and economic coherence for the region. It formulates and implements regional strategies and has a capacity in networking with all stakeholders on local, regional, national, and international level in order to effectively achieve its goals.

The representative body of the region is county council. The executive functions are competences of the chairman who is helped in his duties by the vice chairman. The Chairman of the Regional Council is the legal representative of the institution; he manages operations and is the head of the administration.

Regarding EU-funded interregional project management, the Chairman of the Regional Council is given by law the authority to sign contracts, initiate procurements procedures, cooperate with third parties and take key actions on the best interest of the region. He can delegate other aspects of the project management to the vice chairman or other staff members. The Project Management Unit is composed by the Project Manager who has operational responsibility for the implementation of the overall project and will ensure timely commencement of the entire project within the time schedule. The Financial Manager has the responsibility to enable efficient overall financial and budgetary management of the operation. The Communication Manager has the responsibility to communicate internally and externally all-important aspect of the project. The Project Management Team is composed by experienced staff members of the Regional Council and reports and informs the Chairman periodically throughout the implementation of the project>

A project management unit (members from the relevant Regional Authorities) and a Steering Group (e.g. Regional Council, Ministry, etc.) will be formed.

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

N/A

# LOGISTICS AND TIMING

## Location

Region of Berat, Albania

## Start date & period of implementation of tasks

The intended start date is <07.4.2025> and the period of implementation of the contract will be < 25> months from this date and including the closure phase. Please see Articles 19.1 and 19.2 of the special conditions for the actual start date and period of implementation.

# REQUIREMENTS

## Staff

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 approved to work 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 as proof that the expert is seconded or on personal leave.

### Key experts

Key experts are not required

### Other experts, support staff & backstopping

CVs for experts other than the key experts should not be submitted in the tender but the tenderer will have to demonstrate in their offer that they have access to experts with the required profiles. The contractor shall select and hire other experts as required according to the needs. The selection procedures used by the contractor to select these other experts shall be transparent, and shall be based on pre-defined criteria, including professional qualifications, language skills and work experience.

The costs for backstopping and support staff, as needed, are considered to be included in the tenderer's financial offer.

## Office accommodation

: Office accommodation for each expert working on the contract is to be provided by the contractor.

## 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.

## Equipment

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

# REPORTS

## Reporting requirements

The contractor will submit the following reports in <English> in one original and one copy:

* **Inception Report** of maximum 12 pages to be produced after one 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.
* **Draft final report** of maximum <20> pages (main text, excluding annexes). This report 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 parties on the draft report. The deadline for sending the final report is 15 days after receipt of comments on the draft final report. The report shall contain a sufficiently detailed description of the different options to support an informed decision on CCI sector. 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.

## Submission and approval of reports

The report referred to above must be submitted to the project manager identified in the contract. The project manager is responsible for approving the reports.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## Definition of indicators

< Specific performance measures chosen because they provide valid, useful, practical and comparable measures of progress towards achieving expected results. Can be quantitative: measures of quantity, including statistical statements; or qualitative: judgements and perception derived from subjective analysis. >

## Special requirements

< No special requirements are envisaged.>