TERMS OF REFERENCE AND TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

EU4Innovation East – Technical Assistance for ecosystem strategy and data monitoring

1. General information

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| **Assignment name** | Support the development and implementation of a coordinated strategy and establishment of ecosystem-wide data monitoring system |
| **Beneficiary** | Expertise France – EU4Innovation East project |
| **Country** | Republic of Moldova |
| **Assignment Duration** | December 1, 2025 – March 13, 2026 |

1. Context and justification of the need

The EU4Innovation East is a regional project aiming at enhancing the competitiveness of the startup ecosystem within 5 countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. EU4Innovation East focuses on strengthening the performance of the local ecosystems to provide support to startups, improving access to funding and markets, and delivering targeted support to Ukraine’s tech ecosystem. The initiative combines co-financing, skills training, regulatory guidance, and gender-inclusive measures to promote long-term, sustainable innovation across the region.

The EU4Innovation East project is funded by the European Union, co-funded by the French government and implemented by Expertise France.

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| Title: | Initiative “EU4Innovation East” – Support to Digital Innovation in the Eastern Partnership region |
| Geographic scope: | Multi-country Eastern Partner: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine |
| Duration: | • Duration: 54 months, i.e. 4.5 years (04/2024 - 10/2028) |
| Financed by: | • EU Commission: 20.000.000,00€  • France: 2.120.000,00€, earmarked for Ukraine |
| Implementing Agency: | Expertise France (EF) |
| Overall objective: | Strengthen the competitiveness and maturity of the EaP startup ecosystem |
| Specific  Objectives: | **SO1:** Enhance early-stage funding access for EaP startups, especially those led or co-founded by women, by creating a new funding mechanism and improving incubation programs, including technology transfer initiatives.  **SO2:** Foster innovation development in EaP ecosystems by structuring and improving the business environment.  **SO3:** Amplify the visibility of EaP startups and strengthen connections with European investors, fostering both funding acquisition, market access, and increased local interest in the entrepreneurial journey. |
| Pillars description: | Pillar 1 - Early-stage funding  Pillar 2 - Backing high added-value segments and high-performance incubation  Pillar 3 - Strengthening Community ties  Pillar 4 - International Spotlight for EaP Startups Integrating European emblematic events |

Local context

Moldova’s innovation ecosystem is evolving, with increasing activity among startups, support organizations, government institutions, and international donors. According to the annual report by Startup Moldova, in 2024 Moldovan startups collectively raised $7.9 million, twicethe amount secured in 2023.

Yet despite this momentum, coordination remains suboptimal. Stakeholders operate with varying priorities, data standards, and reporting formats, resulting in fragmented insights and limited strategic alignment. Donor initiatives, while valuable, often lack integration with local efforts, further complicating the landscape.

This assignment seeks to address these gaps by supporting the development and implementation of a coordinated strategy for ecosystem-wide data monitoring. The selected team will engage stakeholders to co-design a strategic framework that reflects shared priorities, ensures interoperability, and aligns with international best practices. By analysing existing datasets—particularly those curated by Startup Moldova—the team will generate a baseline report and develop dashboards that visualize ecosystem trends, gaps, and opportunities. The dashboards will be further integrated into the Startup Moldova website to enhance local visibility and accessibility. Among other areas, the strategy will assess the long-term viability of showcasing ecosystem data on an international dashboard and will propose funding options to support such an initiative.

Beyond technical outputs, the assignment aims to foster a culture of collaboration and data stewardship. It will propose mechanisms for ongoing data governance, build institutional capacity, and facilitate donor coordination around shared metrics and strategic goals. Ultimately, this work will lay the foundation for a more transparent, resilient, and internationally credible innovation ecosystem in Moldova.

1. Objectives of the assignment

This Terms of Reference (TOR) outlines a consulting assignment aimed to strengthen strategic coordination and data governance across Moldova’s tech and startup ecosystem.

3.1. General objective

To strengthen strategic coordination and data-driven decision-making across Moldova’s tech and startup ecosystem by developing a unified strategy and establishing a sustainable, ecosystem-wide data monitoring system that enables transparency, alignment, and impact measurement.

3.2. Specific objectives

* Develop a unified strategy for the ecosystem development, as well as ecosystem-wide data monitoring system, grounded in stakeholder needs and international best practices.
* Improve coordination between ecosystem actors and donors by establishing shared data standards and reporting mechanisms.
* Analyze existing datasets from Startup Moldova and other sources to produce a baseline report on the ecosystem’s current status.
* Design dashboards and visual tools that enable multi-stakeholder engagement and informed decision-making.
* Recommend sustainable mechanisms for ongoing data collection, validation, and use.

1. Description of the assignment

The assignment will support the development of a coordinated strategy and the establishment of a sustainable, ecosystem-wide data monitoring system for Moldova’s tech and startup landscape. It includes stakeholder consultations, strategy drafting, analysis of existing datasets (notably from Startup Moldova), and the creation of dashboards and visual tools. The work is supposed to enhance coordination among ecosystem actors and donors, improve data governance, and enable evidence-based decision-making.

* 1. Description of Services

The selected provider will be expected to deliver the services in phased approached, as follows:

* + 1. Phase 1: Strategy Development
* Conduct consultations with ecosystem actors (startups, support organizations, government, donors) to identify data needs, gaps, and priorities.
* Map existing data sources, collection practices, and institutional roles.
* Draft a coordinated strategy for data monitoring, including governance, interoperability, and sustainability components.
* Facilitate alignment between donor initiatives and local data efforts.
  + 1. Phase 2: Data Analysis & Reporting
* Review and analyze existing datasets from Startup Moldova and other relevant actors.
* Produce an initial report with key findings, trends, and gaps.
* Develop dashboards and visualizations tailored to different stakeholder groups (e.g., government, donors, startups, investors).
* Ensure alignment with EU4Innovation East and other regional initiatives.
  + 1. Phase 3: Recommendations & Capacity Building
* Propose mechanisms for continuous data collection, validation, and reporting.
* Identify capacity-building needs for local institutions and data custodians.
* Facilitate a validation workshop with key ecosystem actors and donors to ensure buy-in and usability.
  1. Anticipated deliverables

| ***Deliverable*** | ***Description*** | ***Indicative timeline*** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Inception Report** | Includes methodology, work plan, and stakeholder map | *Week 2* |
| **Draft Strategy** | A coordinated ecosystem strategy and framework for ecosystem-wide data monitoring | *Week 5-6* |
| **Data Analysis Report annexed startups dataset** | Key findings, trends, and gaps based on existing datasets, including gender and green startup representation | *Week 7-8* |
| **Dashboards & Visuals** | Interactive tools tailored to different stakeholder groups | *Week 9-10* |
| **Stakeholders’ validation workshop (online)** | Validate the report findings, defined stakeholders’ roadmap, workshop report | *Week 10-11* |
| **Final Report & Recommendations** | Consolidated outputs and roadmap for sustainability | *Week 12-15* |

* 1. Coordination

The selected consultants will work in close coordination with EU4Innovation East and collaborate with Startup Moldova, Dreamups, XY, YEP! and other ecosystem organisations. They will make sure to include relevant donor-funded projects and organisations in the consultation process.

1. Place, duration and terms of performance

The assignment shall be implemented in Chișinău, the Republic of Moldova. The provider selected for this assignment is expected to have a strong local presence to facilitate direct engagement with stakeholders, beneficiaries, and institutional partners.

The duration of the assignment is 15 weeks from the date of contract signature. The implementation will follow a phased approach aligned with the indicative timeline from section 4.2 Anticipated deliverables.

1. Qualifications and experience

The assignment may be undertaken by a team of experts, a consortium, or an organization. The ideal candidates will demonstrate:

* Proven experience in executing assignments of similar complexity, including ecosystem coordination efforts, strategy development, data governance, and ecosystem mapping.
* Strong analytical skills and proficiency in data visualization tools (e.g., Power BI, Tableau).
* Familiarity with Moldova’s startup and innovation landscape.
* Experience working with donor-funded projects and multi-stakeholder environments.
* Ability to produce concise, audience-specific outputs in English and Romanian.

1. Application documents

The application documents as well as all correspondence and documents relating to this assignment must be written in English.

Candidates must submit the following documents:

* A proof of legal registration (certificate of registration).
* The attached application form - Expression of Interest Form, including the annexes: Sworn Statement on Exclusion Criteria, the Absence of Conflict of Interest and the Third Party Identification Sheet.
* The attached GDPR compliance verification form, used to verify that the bidder has implemented appropriate technical and organisational measures such that data processing complies with relevant data protection laws and regulations (GDPR and French data protection legislation), thereby guaranteeing the rights of data subjects;
* The draft contract, including the candidate's financial offer, duly completed, dated and signed;
* A technical offer comprising:
* A description of the applicant organization, including its relevant credentials, track record, and previous experience that demonstrate its suitability for the assignment.
* Curriculum vitae (CVs) of the expert(s) proposed for the implementation of the activities, highlighting their qualifications, thematic expertise, experience in angel investment and prior relevant engagements.
* A detailed financial offer, including:
  + A breakdown of costs presented as a unit price schedule.
  + The schedule should indicate the price per man-day, provide an estimate of the total number of days required to complete the assignment, and cover all services to be delivered under the contract.
  + The financial offer must also include all associated costs, such as travel, accommodation, venue rental, catering, materials, and any other expenses necessary for the successful implementation of the assignment.

The documents requested above are mandatory. If missing, the tender submitted will not be compliant and will therefore be rejected.

Electronic submission via the French government procurement platform at <https://www.marches-publics.gouv.fr> is mandatory. Any submission via other means will be rejected.

Deadline for submission: **November 14, 2025, COB Paris time.**

The period of validity of the offers submitted is fixed at 90 calendar days from the deadline for submission of tenders.

1. Evaluation and selection

Expertise France will first check the eligibility of the applications and their ability to provide the service. Subsequently, it will evaluate the offers according to the following criteria:

Criterion 1: Technical offer

Each technically conforming offer will be evaluated based on the following criteria, with a total of 70 points. The Technical Score (TS) will be calculated by summing the points awarded for each sub-criterion.

**Technical Offer Evaluation Breakdown**

The technical value of each application will be assessed against the following sub-criteria, for a total of 70 points:

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| **Sub-criteria for assessing the technical quality** | **Maximum number of points** |
| **Understanding of the Assignment and Context** | **10** |
| **Proposed Approach and Methodology** | **30** |
| **Organisational and Team Experience** | **30** |
| **TOTAL** | **70** |

**Minimum Technical Score to Qualify**

Only bids scoring 50 points or more in the technical evaluation will proceed to financial assessment.

Criterion 2: Price of the services

The Financial Score (FS), with a maximum of 30 points, will be calculated to allow a comparative assessment of the financial offers submitted by all candidates with conforming bids. The lowest-priced bid will receive the full 30 points, while other bids will be scored proportionally using the following formula:

FS = Lowest Price / Bid Price × 30

Total score will be calculated as a sum of Technical and Financial scores.

1. Negotiations

Following the initial analysis of bids by the Evaluation Committee, the contracting authority may enter into negotiations with all or selected bidders, ensuring equal treatment throughout. The contracting authority, however, reserves the right to award the contract without engaging in negotiations.

1. Additional information

In order to access the tender consultation space, bidders must connect to the French government procurement platform at: <https://www.marches-publics.gouv.fr>