

Call for International Consultant for an Assessment of Master Programme Courses on Research Methodologies at the University of Tirana

Project-/mandate name: 1404.02.1.0 PERFORM

Country: Albania

Positions: 1 international expert

Contract Duration 1 August – 15 October 2018

1. Background

PERFORM – Performing and Responsive Social Sciences, is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, aimed at improving the contribution of social science research to socio-economic and political processes of change in Western Balkan countries. The project focuses on three outcome areas: (i) strengthened social science communities; (ii) systemic linkages with political reform processes, civil society organizations, private sector and media; (iii) and favourable framework conditions and financial mechanisms.

An important contributor towards a strong social science community is the proper skillset needed to perform high quality research. Research design and methodology are important factors that set the basis of any research project, and contribute to timely, accurate, efficient and reliable research results.

In line with its goals, PERFORM is interested in assessing and developing the content the curricula on research methods in selected study programmes of the University of Tirana (Albania).

In May 2017, the Institute of Development Studies (UK) undertook an assessment of current shortcomings in the wider social science research system related to research design and methodology, and developed a series of recommendations on how to improve the situation on the ground. The assessment showed that most Albanian universities and research centres are producing research that lacks methodological rigour. One of the most important implications of this is that Albanian researchers are unable to provide original evidence that can help respond to the country's development plans and issues. The findings of the assessment report were validated also by the 2018 country report on Albania's approximation to the EU *acquis*, which stated that "Albania's capacity for research, development and innovation remains low [...] [and] the quality of education needs to be raised at all levels".

In this context, and based on an agreement with the Rectorate of the University of Tirana,

PERFORM is interested in assessing the research methodology courses in the study programmes of the Faculty of History and Philology. This includes gaining a better understanding of the quality and topicality of the methodological education, as well as evaluating the methodological courses at the Master level (MSc, MA), along with providing targeted recommendations on how to improve the content of the respective courses.

2. Scope of the collaboration

The main purpose of intervention is to assess a limited number of research methodology courses in the Master programmes of the Faculty of History and Philology, University of Tirana (Albania) to gain an understanding how they compare with international standards. The Contractor is expected to conduct the assessment of current courses on methodological skills at the Master level programmes in the Faculty of History and Philology.

3. Objectives of the collaboration

The Contractor will produce a report, which will address the following objectives:

1. Providing an analysis of all aspects of the methodological education in the current study programmes including, but not limited to, the following components:
 - Comparison of the courses with the current state-of-the-art in an international context and with regards to the different traditions within the academic disciplines;
 - Evaluation of the methodological training in selected study programmes and an evaluation of the quality, topicality and specialization of the offered courses, as well as how the current courses in methodological education provide important skills to conduct scientific research (ex. MA thesis; PhD thesis);
 - Identification of good practices in the didactics of teaching methods that can be replicated in the Albanian context.
2. Developing clear, concise and comprehensive recommendations for measures addressing the improvement of the content of these courses and their alignment with the current state-of-the-art in the respective fields of science.

The study programmes and methodological courses from the respective study programmes have to be selected in cooperation with the faculty and departments of the University of Tirana and PERFORM, the focus is on social science. The assessment will be performed in cooperation with members of the faculties and will be assisted by a local expert.

4. Expected results (or Outputs)

The expert is expected to produce an assessment report, which shall include:

- a. An evaluation of the content of the methodological courses in the different study programmes, including the quality, topicality and coherence of the courses, the methodological training instruments (e.g. with software, homework), the positioning of the courses within the study programmes and their comparison to international standards;
- b. Clear, concise and targeted recommendations for measures to be taken, so as to adjust methodological education at Master level in line with the standards in Western European Universities. They should lead to an improvement of the courses, study materials and a higher capacity to conduct cutting-edge research (if implemented).

It is the duty of the international expert to propose the design and structure of the document. The length of the study report should be max. 5 pages per each study programme.

The Contractor is expected to share with University of Fribourg and PERFORM NCU Albania the following outputs within the indicate deadlines:

- In coordination with the local expert: Draft version of the study (*by 30 September 2018*);
- In coordination with the local expert: Final version of the study (*by 15 October 2018*).

The study shall be considered as approved after revision and clearance by the University of Fribourg and PERFORM NCU Albania.

5. Requirements for applicants

International expert	
Education:	Post-Graduate Degree in the field of History and/or Social Sciences.
Experience and competences:	At least 10 years of relevant research experience in the field of history and/or social sciences; Good understanding of the university curricula; Experience in developing policy-oriented research; Experience in assessing evidence-informed decision-making; Experience with internationally funded research projects; Excellent analytical and writing skills; Proven team worker; Willingness to travel to Albania.
Language requirements:	Full professional fluency in English.

6. Financial offer

The international expert will work for a maximum of 11 working days.

Applicants should submit a financial offer specifying the gross remuneration fee per day, and total amount. Expenses incurred for regional and wider travel shall not be included in the financial offer. These costs will be paid by PERFORM directly.

7. Time frame of the assignment

This assignment will cover the period of 1 August 2018 – 15 October 2018.

8. Application process

8.1. Required documents

1. Cover letter/Expression of interest outlining clearly how you meet the requirements of the position;
2. Full professional curriculum vitae, including full list of academic publications;
3. Financial offer (including a detailed breakdown of the use of time in the different phases of the research).

Please submit your application in English language to the following email address:

PERFORM-Albania@helvetas.org

The deadline for submission is 18 July 2018.