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# 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## 1.1. Partner country

Albania

## 1.2. Contracting authority

Agjencia Kombëtare e Rinisë (National Youth Agency - NYA)

## 1.3. Country background

Albania is an EU candidate country experiencing significant transformation in the social and institutional dimensions, including youth development and mental health policies. As a country with a young population and ongoing structural reforms, youth mental well-being is increasingly recognized as a policy priority, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19 and recent natural and economic disruptions.

The government is committed to aligning its national strategies with EU priorities, including the European Pillar of Social Rights and health equity frameworks. However, regional disparities, limited mental health infrastructure, and underdeveloped cross-sector cooperation mechanisms still pose challenges in effective policy implementation.

## 1.4. Current situation in the sector

Mental health services for young people in Albania remain underdeveloped, with a lack of preventive programs, weak referral systems, and insufficient interinstitutional coordination. The youth sector has made progress in participation and empowerment initiatives, yet mental health support is rarely integrated into youth policy frameworks.

National youth strategies acknowledge the importance of well-being but operationalisation remains fragmented. At the regional level, coordination between civil society, education institutions, and public health actors is inconsistent. The current setting provides an opportunity to mainstream mental health into youth development policies through evidence-based, participatory processes supported by EU cooperation.

## 1.5. Related programmes and other donor activities

The proposed contract is complementary to existing national and regional efforts supported by the EU and UN agencies, particularly in the fields of youth policy reform, public health, and civic engagement. It aligns with ongoing Erasmus+ and IPA initiatives targeting youth empowerment and draws synergies with regional exchanges under Interreg Europe's thematic priority on social inclusion and well-being.

# 2. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTPUTS

## 2.1. Overall objective

The overall objective (Impact) to which this action contributes is:

**To improve regional public policies that enhance mental resilience, emotional well-being, and psychosocial support systems for youth in vulnerable and transitioning regions across Europe.**

This contract contributes to that goal by strengthening the institutional and communication capacities of the National Youth Agency (NYA) in Albania through structured stakeholder engagement and evidence-based knowledge exchange.

## 2.2. Specific objective(s)

The specific objective(s) (Outcome(s)) of this contract are as follows:

- To support structured regional and interregional stakeholder exchange focused on youth mental health policy and practice;
- To raise public awareness and institutional visibility of mental health issues affecting Albanian youth through communication materials and public dissemination;
- To improve NYA's capacity to deliver compliant communication outputs within the framework of Interreg Europe-funded initiatives.

## 2.3. Expected outputs to be achieved by the contractor

The contractor will be paid on a **global price basis** for the delivery of the following outputs, corresponding to 25 working days:

- A **baseline study on youth mental health in Albania**, focusing on needs analysis, institutional mapping, and identified gaps in service provision or youth engagement.
- **Expert thematic contributions** to NYA's policy improvement roadmap, including at least one written input (e.g., briefing note or recommendation set) supporting project deliverables.
- **Participation in 1 national stakeholder meeting**, providing technical guidance on youth mental health trends, research findings, and policy directions.
- **Participation in 1 interregional peer exchange**, contributing with contextual input, and ensuring alignment with Albanian realities.
- A **final expert summary report** highlighting key recommendations, lessons learned, and proposed next steps for integrating youth mental health in local and regional public policy.

## 3. ASSUMPTIONS & RISKS

### 3.1. Assumptions underlying the project

- The National Youth Agency (NYA) will provide timely access to relevant documentation, data, and stakeholders necessary for the baseline study and policy input.
- The expert is familiar with national youth policies, mental health systems, and Interreg Europe methodologies for policy learning.
- The HARMONY project activities will proceed according to the timeline outlined in the application, particularly regarding stakeholder meetings and interregional exchanges.
- There will be constructive collaboration between NYA, the Lead Partner, and other project partners in integrating youth mental health dimensions into shared outputs.

### **3.2. Risks**

- Delays in project activities such as meetings or exchanges could affect the timing of the expert's inputs and availability.
- Limited access to reliable data on youth mental health may hinder the comprehensiveness of the baseline study.
- Stakeholder participation levels may vary, impacting the quality and representativeness of consultations.
- Shifts in national or EU-level priorities could reduce institutional engagement with the youth mental health theme.
- Potential overlap with other experts or institutions involved in similar thematic activities could require additional coordination to avoid duplication.

## **4. SCOPE OF THE WORK**

### **4.1. General**

#### **4.1.1. Description of the assignment**

The assignment consists of providing external expert support to the National Youth Agency (NYA) for the preparation of a regional/local baseline study on youth mental health in Albania and the formulation of evidence-based recommendations as part of the HARMONY policy improvement process.

The expert will contribute to shaping NYA's thematic input within the project, ensuring that youth mental health is properly addressed in interregional exchanges, stakeholder events, and strategic project deliverables.

### **4.2. Specific work**

The contractor shall perform the following tasks over the course of 25 working days:

#### **Task 1 – Baseline Study Preparation**

- Collect and analyse data on youth mental health in Albania, focusing on existing public services, institutional gaps, and community-level challenges.
- Conduct desk research and, if applicable, short interviews with key institutional and civil society actors.
- Deliver a baseline report with findings and contextual framing of NYA's policy challenges in the field.

#### **Task 2 – Stakeholder Input & Consultation**

- Support the design and delivery of one national stakeholder consultation event.
- Provide an expert presentation or moderation contribution on mental health issues affecting youth in Albania.
- Document participant feedback relevant to the project's objectives.

### Task 3 – Interregional Contribution

- Participate in one interregional exchange activity (online or in person), representing Albania's youth mental health profile and contributing to cross-country learning.
- Draft content or summaries for NYA's contributions to Interregional Meeting Summary Reports, with emphasis on mental health practices and challenges.

### Task 4 – Final Recommendations & Reporting

- Prepare a final expert report consolidating key findings, institutional lessons learned, and practical recommendations for integrating youth mental health in local and regional policy.

## 4.3. Project management

### 4.3.1. Responsible body

The responsible contracting authority is the **National Youth Agency (NYA)** – Albania, acting as Project Partner 2 (PP2) in the HARMONY project consortium.

### 4.3.2. Management structure

The expert will report to NYA's HARMONY Project Coordinator and work closely with the staff responsible for stakeholder engagement and policy inputs.

All deliverables will be reviewed and validated by NYA prior to submission to the Lead Partner or project platform.

## 5. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

### 5.1. Location

The assignment will be carried out primarily in Albania. The expert may work remotely but is expected to be available for in-person participation at the national stakeholder meeting and, if applicable, one interregional exchange meeting (which may be held online or in another EU partner country depending on the project plan).

The main project implementation site is Tirana, where the National Youth Agency (NYA) is based.

### 5.2. Start date & period of implementation of tasks

- **Intended start date:** October 2025
- **Duration of assignment:** The contract covers a total of **25 working days**, which are expected to be used **intermittently** between October 2025 and June 2026, depending on the timeline of project activities.

The expert must remain available to complete all outputs listed in Section 2.3. Should project activities be rescheduled, the assignment period may be adjusted accordingly by mutual agreement, without exceeding the total number of contracted working days.

## **6. 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.

#### **6.1.1. Experts**

There are no fixed minimum requirements for the expert's legal status or affiliation; however, the contractor must ensure that the proposed individual meets the following minimum profile:

##### **Education:**

- University degree (minimum bachelor's level) in psychology or a related field.

##### **Professional experience:**

- At least 3 years of relevant professional experience in psychological counselling or applied mental health services.
- Experience in the delivery of mental health support training sessions.
- Experience with the use of creative tools aimed at fostering trust and communication in intercultural teams.
- Previous engagement in virtual training events (minimum 5 events delivered).

##### **Skills:**

- Proven ability to produce clear, concise, and evidence-based analytical reports and recommendations.
- Fluency in English and Albanian (written and spoken).
- Strong communication and presentation skills, including online facilitation.
- High degree of autonomy and reliability, with the ability to work independently and meet deadlines.

All experts must be independent and free from any conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they undertake under this contract.

### **6.1.2. Support facilities & backstopping**

The costs for support facilities, including backstopping, are included in the tenderer's financial offer.

### **6.2. Office accommodation**

No office accommodation will be provided by the contracting authority. The expert is expected to work from their own premises.

### **6.3. Facilities to be provided by the contractor**

The contractor (or expert) must ensure access to the following:

- Secure and reliable digital infrastructure for data processing and communication
- Productivity software for document writing and data presentation (e.g., MS Word, Excel, PDF tools)
- Communication tools such as email, videoconferencing platforms, and collaborative document sharing systems

All tools and costs associated with implementation are borne by the contractor and included in the global price.

### **6.4. Equipment**

No equipment is to be purchased under this contract. Any tools, hardware, or software used to complete the assignment must be provided and maintained by the contractor.

## **7. REPORTS**

### **7.1. Reporting requirements**

The expert shall deliver the following outputs in **English**, unless otherwise agreed with NYA, in both **editable format (.docx/.xlsx)** and **PDF**:

- 1. Baseline Study on Youth Mental Health in Albania**
  - Content: Data overview, institutional mapping, gap analysis, and priority areas
  - Deadline: Within the first 8 weeks of contract start
- 2. Written inputs to Interregional Meeting Summary Reports**
  - Quantity: 2 contributions
  - Content: Reflections on youth mental health practices and lessons from exchanges
- 3. Participation Notes and Summary of Stakeholder Meeting**
  - Content: Summary of expert's intervention, key messages, and relevant feedback
- 4. Final Expert Summary Report**

- Content: Recommendations for future policy improvement, institutional insights, and reflections on youth mental health integration in the HARMONY project

## 5. Ad-hoc inputs or clarifications

- Format: Brief notes or memos as needed for NYA's contributions to policy papers or communications
- Timing: Upon request

All deliverables must be aligned with the HARMONY project timeline and will be submitted to NYA's Project Coordinator and designated staff.

## 7.2. Submission and approval of reports

- Reports will be submitted **electronically** to the Project Coordinator and will be subject to **internal quality review within 10 working days**.
- Feedback (if any) will be provided once per report.
- Reports will be considered **approved** either upon written confirmation or in the absence of feedback after 10 working days.
- Payments will be processed in line with the contract upon formal approval of the corresponding deliverables.

# 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## 8.1. Definition of indicators

The performance of the expert will be assessed against the following indicators:

- **Timeliness**
  - All deliverables are submitted within the agreed deadlines set by NYA and aligned with the HARMONY work plan.
- **Quality of outputs**
  - Baseline study, meeting inputs, and reports are complete, relevant, and based on sound evidence.
  - Contributions are clearly written, structured, and practically useful for institutional learning.
- **Relevance of recommendations**
  - The expert's outputs contribute to actionable policy insights and are tailored to Albania's youth mental health context.
- **Engagement and responsiveness**
  - The expert actively participates in scheduled events (national/interregional) and provides clarifications or input when requested.



- **Contribution to visibility and learning**
  - Expert insights enhance NYA's visibility in interregional learning processes and support the integration of youth mental health into policy discussion.

## 8.2. Special requirements

- The expert must ensure **confidentiality** of any personal, institutional, or sensitive data accessed during the contract.
- All reports and outputs must respect **data protection standards** and may not be publicly disseminated without NYA's written consent.
- The expert is expected to use **inclusive and non-stigmatizing language** when referring to mental health issues, in accordance with EU guidelines.
- NYA reserves the right to request briefings or lessons learned at project closure to support sustainability and knowledge transfer.
- The expert is encouraged to identify and flag any **best practices or systemic challenges** that emerge during the assignment for consideration in follow-up actions.

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