THE ADVISORY GROUP RULEBOOK

1. Background

The overall goal of the Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD 2) is to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans (WB) by empowering civil society and youth to actively take part in decision making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for civil society organizations (CSOs).

Specific objective of the project is to strengthen partnerships between local governments and civil society in the WB by enhancing transparency in funding of CSOs from local government budgets and promoting youth and civic engagement in decision-making and community developments. Underlying intention is to ensure sustainable and transparent, development-oriented and project-based approach to funding of CSOs by local governments’ budgets that contributes to realization of legitimate local priorities in line with local development strategies. The project will focus on institutionalizing the interaction between LG and CSOs, while strengthening capacities of all relevant stakeholders to engage more productively in such partnerships.

ReLOaD 2 is financed from the European Union and in implemented from UNDP throughout the following WB countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. As a regional initiative, ReLOaD 2 is a continuation of ReLOaD 1, implemented during 2017-2020. ReLOaD 1 in partnership with 12 municipalities in Albania and 58 CSOs, implemented 82 projects in several areas, such as: social inclusion, environment protection, youth, etc. with a total of 28,000 final beneficiaries. The total grant absorbed from CSOs in 12 partner municipalities amounted to 1.13 million EUR. All partner municipalities approved the LOD methodology as a transparent and competitive mechanism to disburse grants to CSOs for service delivery in their communities. Majority of partner municipalities continued to use the LOD methodology while opening public calls for CSOs funded totally from their local budgets.

It is envisaged the ReLOaD2 project to engage 50 LGs in the Western Balkan during 48 months of project intervention. In Albania, 10 LGs are planned to be engaged in the project, together with CSOs. In regards to the municipalities, 6 will be new partner municipalities and 4 partner municipalities from ReLOaD 1. Gender sensitivity and promoting multi-ethnic interventions will be given special consideration in each objective and all the activities.

* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to position on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UNDP all references to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of the UN Resolution 1244/1999.
2. Purpose, entry into force and revisions of the Rulebook

The purpose of the Rulebook is to define the overall responsibilities of the Advisory Group (AG), its specific roles, composition and modalities of operation. The Rulebook shall be adopted by the Advisory Group. It enters into force on the day of the AG first meeting and expires by the end of the Project. Any changes deemed necessary to the Rulebook after its adoption shall be nominated for deliberation by members of AG or the project team.

The rules and principles of AG meetings shall be presented and discussed during the first AG meeting and applied up to the end of the project.

3. Overall responsibilities and functions of AG

AG will be employed with a purpose of providing advisory support to the Board of Partners (BoP) of ReLOaD 2 project, ensuring regular feedback vis-à-vis the project implementation and its effects on civil society and local governments in Albania. AG members will share information about ReLOaD2 project activities and results to all other relevant stakeholders to support achievement of project results. AG will also share information about other relevant developments in the field of civil society and/or local governance.

Specific responsibilities

AG will have the following specific responsibilities:

- to serve as a forum for cooperation and dialogue on issues related to civil society development and local government as well as their cooperation;
- to observe that the project’s services are in line with the needs of beneficiaries in local communities. In these regards, every member can express his/her opinion regarding project activities/components during project implementation;
- to act as a link between the project and its partners (local government and grassroots CSOs). In these regards every member can promote and facilitate (based on possibilities, areas of expertise and activity) relations between project and its partners and stakeholder;
- to promote and share information related to CSO activities, capacities and plans and activities of the ReLOaD2 project in Albania;
- to nominate its representative at the Board of Partners (member) who will proactively participate in all AG and Board of Partners meetings. For more details please see Annex 1.

4. Composition and modalities of operation

Composition of AG will include, but will not be limited to: representative of academic institutions, grass-root CSOs, individuals with expertise in local governance and/or civil society, and other interested stakeholders, such as: representatives from ReLOaD1 partner municipalities. Up to 15 members will be selected through public call for AG members.

Participation and contributions in AG are strictly on a voluntary basis.
This project is funded by European Union

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CSOs that have a representative in this Advisory Group, will not be eligible to apply in public calls to be performed during ReLOaD 2 project in Albania.

The function of the technical secretary of AG shall be performed by ReLOaD project team. The technical secretary shall be responsible for preparing and/or distributing the provisional agenda and working materials, as well as for the preparing and distributing the minutes. The provisional agenda and relevant materials shall be distributed to AG members no fewer than five calendar days in advance of a session. The minutes of the session shall be distributed to AG members no later than ten calendar days after the session. AG members may initiate meetings through the technical secretary as well.

Facilitation of the meetings will be organised within AG by electing a Chairperson. S/he might be elected with a majority votes and appointed on a rotational principle for at least 6 months. The Chairperson for the next meeting will be elected at the end of AG meeting or at the beginning of the organized meeting (depending on the timing of the next meeting).

UNDP, Delegation of the European Union to and/or other ministries/institutions’ representatives can participate in the work of AG but they will not be AG members and will not have voting rights. AG meeting agenda and subjects of discussion should be elaborated jointly by the technical secretary and the Chairperson of the meeting.

5. Technical aspects

- AG meetings will be organized in UNDP premises or online, based on the situation.
- participants coming outside of the city where AG meetings take place will be reimbursed as per travel expenses for a two-way trip according to the ReLOaD project travel reimbursement rules,
- all accrued AG meeting cost will be covered by the ReLOaD project,
- usage of information technologies will be strongly encouraged to increase accessibility of AG members when unable to participate at AG meeting,
- the working languages of AG is Albanian.

6. Sessions

Depending on the situation, AG will meet at least twice a year (online meetings are acceptable too). In exceptional cases, AG meetings can be called by AG Chairperson or the technical secretary on ad hoc basis. Bilateral communication between the technical secretary and AG members will inevitably take place more regularly. Considering the AG functioning in ReLOaD 1 and the need to consult and discuss and seek advice for key elements of the project, more meetings of AG during ReLOaD 2 will be encouraged.

Timeframe of the sessions will coincide with the activity plan of the project, which will be shared with AG members at the beginning of each year and when amendments are introduced. The technical secretary or Chairperson of the meeting may request special meetings for different aspects of the project implementation.
Annex 1

AG will nominate its representative to the BoP by majority of votes. This Annex refers to the role and the function of the representative at BoP.

AG representative at the BoP will have following roles and functions:

- participate in the BoP meetings representing the AG and report on AG conclusions and recommendations;
- share with BoP all relevant information/concerns regarding the state of affairs in civil society in country,
- participate in AG meeting providing feedback to AG on BoP meetings and its conclusions and recommendations.

In case that nominated the representative of AG does not represent the interest of Advisory group and/or behave on his/her interest AG will nominate new representative by majority of votes. This dismissed representative will be excluded from further membership of AG, and new member will be selected.

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