

Terms of Reference

Follow-on support to young farmers in the project regions within the project (phase 2)

“Prospects for young people in rural areas” in Serbia

(21.2223.2-001.00)

Description of the Assignment	<i>Provision of training and mentoring support for young farmers that received initial support during phase 1, facilitation of business net-working</i>
Related activity of Annual Workplan	<i>WP 3 – 5</i>
Working days and Location of Assignment	<i>up to 140 days, Serbia</i>
Category	<i>Service contract to citizens association</i>
Time of Assignment	<i>15.09.2025 – 15.04.2026</i>
Geographic scope (project regions)	<i>Bor, Zajecar, Toplica, Jablanica and Picinja Districts in South East and Southern Serbia, Kolunbara and Zlatibor Districts in South West Serbia, Branicevo Distric in Central Serbia.</i>

<p>Submitted by: Ralf Lange</p> <p>Date: 27.07.2025</p>	<p>Approved via email by: GIZ Marija Radovanovic</p>
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1 Introductory notes

Despite improvements over the last years, Serbia still suffers from a high unemployment and not in employment, education or training (NEET) rate of young people. The youth unemployment rate stood at 26.5% in 2020, while the NEET rate stood at nearly 16% for 2020. This is even more pronounced in rural areas. In addition, young people in Serbia, especially in rural areas, are underrepresented in decision-making processes. Among young people, this often results in an exclusion from local labour markets and personal resignation.

Since November 2021, GIZ has been implementing the Technical Cooperation (TC) project “Prospects for young people in rural areas” in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Youth of the Republic of Serbia, as part of the German Development Cooperation (in short called “the project”). The aim is to improve the economic and socio-cultural prospects of young people - including returnees - in pilot districts¹ in rural areas (Module Objective). Duration is until June 2026.

The project’s target group is defined as following: young people in rural areas between the age of 15 and 30 and specifically vulnerable groups such as returnees, young women and ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma) between 18 and 40 years of age. Implementation is along four outputs.

The consortium of FAKT, Involvas and Smart Kolektiv has been commissioned to provide services for the achievement of Output 3 with the aim: “The advisory and networking services for the diversification of income opportunities for young people in rural regions - including returnees - have been improved”.

Through the improvement of service and training offers with regard to the development and improvement of business models, access to financing opportunities, adaptation of products and services as well as for improved networking, young people are enabled to improve their value creation and competitiveness of economic activities for improved and diversified income generation.

The consortium FAKT/ Smart Kolektiv/Involvas is directly responsible to achieve the following updated Module Objective Indicator 3 as well as the corresponding Output Indicators, to which the consulting service, object of these TOR, will contribute:

Module Objective Indicator 3	400 measures to establish or adapt existing models for diversified income perspectives in rural areas are implemented by young people. <u>Baseline:</u> 0 measures (there are no suitable adapted measures in the pilot regions) <u>Target value:</u> 400 measures
Output Indicator 3.1	2,000 counselling services to improve their entrepreneurial skills, finance their business ideas, explore new business models or network were provided to young people - of which 30% were women and 20% with migration experience. <u>Baseline:</u> 500 advisory services (2021) <u>Target value:</u> 500 Baseline plus 2,000 advisory services (2026)
Output Indicator 3.2	10 Initiatives in the agriculture and tourism sectors for improved entrepreneurial networking of young people at local level, within and between value chains and to sales markets are established by market actors. <u>Baseline:</u> 0 initiatives (no suitable networking initiatives exist in the pilot regions so far). <u>Target value:</u> 10 initiatives (2026)

¹ Following districts are part of the Project intervention: Zapadnobački, Zlatiborski, Braničevski, Jablanički, Borški, Kolubarski, Pčinjski, Zaječarski, Podunavski, Toplički, Nišavski, Rasinski.

The services will further contribute to achieving the following impacts:

200* Businesses/rural households have improved competitiveness

220* Jobs are being created

(*numbers are tentative)

2 Context of the sub-contracting assignment

This sub-contract is meant to provide **follow-on agricultural business advisory and networking services to young farmers** that have been identified and provided with initial business mentoring support in the period 01.05.2024 – 30.03.2025 by a citizen organisation providing services to young farmers. With this intervention from mid 2024 till beginning of 2025 of approx. 100 young farmers initially identified, approx. 50 have implemented 62 measures for business improvement.

This service contract aims at **further strengthening the capacity of the young farmers** to manage the generational change in their rural households and to further develop their businesses/ income generating activities, as well as to facilitate business collaboration between them as well as the formation of networks for peer learning and advocacy. The services are supposed to be provided within the operational planning framework of the consortium FAKT/involas/Smart Kolektiv and in close collaboration with the national coordinator of the consortium.

The assignment directly contributes to WP 3 and WP 5.

- WP 3: strengthening of **promotional measures** for businesses in agriculture in selected districts;
- WP 5: **creating or strengthening networks of young entrepreneurs** in rural -tourism and business 2 business linkages for improved collaboration within the agricultural value and market chains

Work Package 3 (development and implementation of trainings and mentoring in digital skills/ business e-readiness, skills training in agriculture/rural development related topics. Aim of this WP is to improve access of young entrepreneurs and business starters to entrepreneurship and specific business-related skills training and business mentoring in order to develop and strengthen their entrepreneurial, technical and social capacities to start businesses and improve businesses in the rural contexts. The work package focusses on three areas: (1) entrepreneurship training tailored to the sectors or agriculture (agripreneurship) and rural tourism, (2) the improvement of digital competences of entrepreneurs (e-readiness) and (3) in more general terms youth-friendly business mentoring and peer2peer learning possibilities. This is to be achieved through (1) capacity building of business development service providers, local governmental and non-governmental organisations, mentors and youth advisors to effectively provide trainings and advisory services, and (2) **direct provision of trainings and business mentoring through this assignment by local trainers.**

Work Package 5 (establishment of networks within and beyond existing value chains) aims to connect young entrepreneurs for creating business linkages and establishing/ fostering supply or value chains, either within a locality and linking suppliers with processors and market outlets. Tasks includes assessing existing networks and value chains, identifying potentials and gaps and facilitating the establishment and fostering of the networks and business linkages.

Work package 5 is expected to be a strong focus of the follow-on assignment

3 Objective and targets of the assignment

Objectives of the assignment are

- i) to select the mentees (young agricultural entrepreneurs, rural households with young people actively engaged) for further support in accordance to the potential and level of engagement they have shown during the first phase of support. Besides selecting previous mentees, the contractor may also identify **up to 30% of new mentees** that belong to the project target group, are situated in the selected project regions and motivated and have the capability in adaptation/improvement of existing business models of rural households, including agri-tourism households run by young people;
- ii) to provide **training and agripreneurship-business mentoring** to the selected business run by young farmers;
- iii) to **facilitate linkages between businesses of mentees, to form local networks or links to existing business or community networks.**

The training and mentoring services are expected to **improve capacity** of young farmers in the following areas:

- young farmers are enabled to **better analyse the business potentials** of their household or their income generating activities and to take measures for improvement;
- have improved their **knowledge on access to finance** and **take steps to apply for funding** (e.g. developing business plans and funding applications);
- Take further measures to **improve their marketing**, e.g. by using digital marketing channels
- Take measures to form **networks** for peer learning and establish **business linkages**
- **Improve their visibility** in the public through the support of MPS

Services are to be delivered in the period 15.09.2025 to 15.04.2026

The contractor is obliged to **achieve the following targets:**

- At least **50 mentees** are selected for continuation of support (this number may also entail new mentees provided they fulfil the criteria)
- **At least 25 mentees** have implemented a total of at least **30** well documented **measures** for further improvement of their business models. The measures for improvement are defined by the list of criteria for business improvement (see annex 1) and need to be documented as case studies according to the project's monitoring regulations. These measures can also be achieved on level of individual businesses and through business collaboration
- **2 networks** (with at least 10 members each) have been established for business collaboration, peer learning and advocacy and function under the umbrella of MPS. Criteria for network functioning are documented in annex 2
- At least **5 business collaborations**, each involving at least 3 businesses, have been established and yield results with regard to improved marketing or joint use of agricultural inputs or other forms of business cooperation (see criteria for functioning business collaboration in annex 2.

4 Tasks to be performed by the Contractor

The contractor is fully responsible for achieving the targets described in section 3 and the activities listed below. The tasks shall be performed under the guidance of the National Project Coordinator and in a

close cooperation with other short-term experts contracted by the consortium assigned to assist in the fulfilment of this contract. These will be in particular:

- Short term expert to support training and mentoring on access to municipal finance
- Short term expert on marketing

The contractor is responsible for providing the following services in line with the requirements and guidance provided by the project coordinator:

- **Selection of the mentees for follow-on business mentoring services.** Identification must be based on a realistic assessment of motivation and opportunities for growth, that will serve as a basis for concrete measures to be implemented by contractors's experts;
- **Organization of at least 2 workshops covering** the following topics:
 - Managing the **change of ownership** of rural households from the old generation to the new farmers
 - **Design thinking** for innovative approaches of business re-modelling in the context of rural households and creation of **mini-business plans**
 - **Access to finance** (including municipal financing and IPARD) – supported by STE of the consortium
 - **Marketing/ Access to (new) markets** – marketing supported by STE of the consortium
- Continuation of **business mentoring support to end-beneficiaries** for motivated young farmers who took part in the first cycle,
- Facilitation of **network creation** through mentoring and referral to network strengthening workshops organised by the consortium
- Promotion of **business linkages** among existing mentees and possibly with existing members of MPS;
- Organising one campaign activity **“Buy Local Products from Young Farmers of Serbia.”**
- Ensuring **promotion and visibility of project activities** and achieved results through the website of the Association (support of this activity through project STE) ;
- **Collect monitoring data in line with requirements of the Project** (all relevant templates shall be provided by Project team).

The assignment is to **achieve the following milestones:**

- By the end of Sept 2025, **50 young farmers/ rural households** headed by young farmers are **identified for further support**; in parallel **2 training measures/workshops are designed and the training concept is submitted to the project coordinator for comments**
- By **Dec 2025 at least 30 young farmers are actively participating** in the project measures, **2 workshops** have been conducted
- **By March 2025 all targets and activities listed above have been achieved**, consultation cards and network documentation reports have been submitted
- By April 2025 a final report of not less than 10 pages has been compiled that includes:
 - Reports on all activities
 - Documentation of 10 business success cases
 - Documentation of 5 business collaborations
 - Documentation of network activities
 - at least 5 news articles about project activities/results achieved have been prepared by the Contractor and posted on their web-site.

5 Time line and deliverables

Task	Deliverable	Deadline
Preparation of the Workplan	Proposal	Till 29 Aug 2025
Contracting (by the consortium)		Till 15 th Sept 2025
Pre-selection of mentees according to agreed criteria	List of 50 pre-selected mentees, list includes information on previous involvement, type of business and information on capacity building need/ interest of the individual	End Sept 2025
2 workshop concepts prepared	Workshop concept and content	End Sept 2025
Provision of mentoring and training for mentees, networks and business collaboration	Report of activities, 30 beneficiaries actively participating by end of Dec 2 trainings conducted <i>(report serves as proof for release 2nd advance payment)</i>	End-December 25
Awareness campaign conducted	Campaign documentation	To be proposed in proposal
Finalisation of training and mentoring activities	at least 30 documented measures of further business improvement 5 active business collaborations 2 sub networks Full documentation according to M+E standards	April 15 th 2026
Narrative and financial reporting	Final narrative and financial report	End April 2026

6 Project management of the contractor

The contract requirements

- The contractor is responsible for selecting, preparing, training and steering the experts assigned to perform the services.
- The contractor makes available equipment and supplies (consumables) and assumes the associated operating and administrative costs.
- The contractor manages costs and expenditures, accounting processes and invoicing in line with the requirements of GIZ.
- The contractor is responsible for collecting data in line with the monitoring system and quality standards and requirements set by the Project team.

In addition, the contractor should submit the following reports:

- Monthly activity reports of personnel deployed according to guidelines of the consortium

- Mid-term narrative report in accordance with Project requirements, submitted by 15th of December 2025
- Evaluation of trainees' satisfaction with the training provided.
- Draft final narrative report in English submitted 2 weeks after the contract closure, for a review, approval and final agreement with the Project team.

7 Personnel concept

The contractor is required to provide personnel who are suited to filling the positions described, on the basis of presenting their CVs to the project coordination team.

The below specified qualifications represent the requirements for this particular assignment.

Coordinator (no. of experts 1, total number of days to be proposed in proposal)

Tasks of the Coordinator

- Overall responsibility for the coordination of assignment of the contractor (including management, monitoring, quality assurance, reporting and deadlines);
- Planning and steering assignments of mentors and workshops;
- Steering selection of mentees for further support;
- Coordinating and ensuring communication with the national coordinator of the consortium and STEs assigned by the consortium to support the measures;
- Overall responsibility for financial management;
- Overall responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation system and regular reporting in accordance with deadlines.

Qualifications of the Coordinator

- University qualification in economy, agriculture, and/or other areas related to the assignment.
- Good business language skills in English.
- 3 years of management/leadership experience as a project team leader or a manager.
- Experience in the areas of agriculture, entrepreneurship, work with rural population.
- Experience in coordinating development cooperation projects.

Field experts (mentors) – support agripreneurs, networking and business collaboration (no. of experts and total number of days subject of the proposal)

Tasks of the Field expert (mentors)

- Delivery of workshops on the topics of interest for selected young farmers.
- Provision of mentoring support to end-beneficiaries, motivated individuals, agricultural households, agripreneurs.
- Facilitation and promotion of business-to-business linkages and business networks.

Qualifications of the Field experts - support to agripreneurs

- Demonstrated experience in providing agricultural and/ or business advisory services to farmers and rural households through provision of advisory services, trainings, mentorship, coaching
- Expertise and demonstrated practical knowledge and experiences in agricultural and agriculture related economic development in rural areas and economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and employment promotion of rural communities.

- At least one expert should have a specific focus on supporting female agripreneurs/ women empowerment in rural areas
- In-depth knowledge of the concept of agricultural diversification.
- Proven familiarity with the contexts of the rural target group and socio-economic intervention measures at national and local level.

Assistant (no of experts 1, number of days subject of proposal)

Tasks of the Assistant

- Support to coordinator and field experts in selection of business entities for further support.
- Preparing news related to the assignment and ensuring they are posted on the website of the Association.
- Collect monitoring data in line with requirements of the Project.
- Perform other administrative and support tasks.

Soft skills of team members

In addition to their specialist qualifications, the following qualifications are required of team members:

- Team skills
- Initiative
- Communication skills
- Sociocultural and intercultural competences
- Efficient, partner- and client-focused working methods
- High standard of professionalism

8 Contractor's references and expertise

The contractor will be selected upon the following criteria proved by the bid:

- Proven record of at least **5 years of advisory services to young farmers** in the above-described age groups
- Proved **access to young farmers** in defined geographic areas of the project
- Proven record of **facilitating dialogue between and networks of young farmers and lobbying for the interests of young farmers**
- Having a history in operating a **communication platform (website)** for information sharing and communication with young farmers
- Experiences in implementing projects funded by national or international development partners
- **Having provided services to at least 100 young farmers for business improvement in the project regions until end of March 2025 on which this follow on measure is building on**

9 The bid

The contractor is expected to provide a bid that includes:

- Technical-methodological concept
- Financial proposal

Technical-methodological concept - the contractor is required to present the concept where it will elaborate on the tasks to be performed with reference to the objectives of the services. Following this, the contractor should present and justify the strategy with which it intends to provide the services for which it is responsible. The structure of the concept must correspond to the structure of the ToR, i.e. entailing the following sections:

- Brief elaboration of the **context (situation and capacity building needs of young farmers)** and the lessons learned in providing mentoring services to young farmers
- Interpretation of the task and **service delivery strategy** with specific reference to the training and mentoring approach and the strategy for promoting networks and business collaboration
- Concept of the campaign
- **Work plan** for delivery of the expected outputs and outcomes
- **List of references** providing proof for the contractor's expertise
- Description of **personnel** concept and CVs

The CVs of the personnel proposed must be submitted with the concept. The CVs must clearly show the position and job the proposed person held in the reference project and for how long. The CVs shall be submitted in English.

The concept shall not exceed 10 pages (excluding CVs).

Financial offer – The financial proposal should be presented on the basis of the aforementioned costing requirements. This means that the financial proposal should contain costs per each position envisaged. The number of days/travel/workshops and the budget amount shall be agreed in the contract as 'up to' amounts. The specifications for pricing are defined in the price schedule.

The gross amount, **not exceeding 20.000 EUR**, must include all travel costs of experts as well as statutory taxes and contributions as applicable by Serbian law.

Costs for trainings/workshops on common topics organised by the project with representatives of networks (e.g. for network management) will be directly born by the Consortium Fakt/Involas/SmartKolektiv.