SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

Final Evaluation of the Eastern Partnership Connect (EaPConnect) project

FWC SIEA 2018 - Lot 4 – Human Development and safety net

EuropeAid/138778/DH/SER/multi

ENI/2015/356-353

Contracting Authority: Unit C1 - Georgia, Moldova & Neighbourhood Cross-Border Cooperation of the Directorate-General Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)

1 BACKGROUND

The "Eastern Partnership Connect" ("EaPConnect") project was launched by the European Union (EU) in 2015 to improve EaP intra-regional connectivity and facilitate participation of local scientists, students and academics in EU and global Research and Education (R&E) collaborations.

The project aims to create a regional R&E network interconnecting the national R&E network (NRENs) in six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and integrating them into the pan-European GÉANT network. For this purpose, a high-speed regional network of optical fibres will be developed and access to scientific databases to students and researchers will be ensured. Coverage of wifi access for students and researchers in the region will be increased at campus and institution level. Two million scientists, academics and students at over 700 institutions across the region are expected to benefit from this connectivity boost.

By enabling fast and reliable exchange of high volumes of data between scientists in the EaP countries and their peers in Europe and further afield, EaPConnect aims also to facilitate collaborative research in areas such as environmental monitoring, telemedicine, life sciences and physics. In addition, stable videoconferencing will support e-learning initiatives or simply enable artists, thousands of miles apart, to perform together in near-real time.

The specific objectives of the project are:

1. To establish and operate a high-capacity broadband internet network for research and education (R&E) across the six EaP partner countries in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine;
2. To integrate the national research and education networks (NRENs) in the region into the pan-European GÉANT network.
3. To build capacity and capabilities to maximise the benefit of research and education networking (including the participation of local scientists, students and academics in global R&E collaborations).
4. To prepare a sustainability plan for the programme beyond the project.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargements Negotiations (DG NEAR) is contributing 95% (€13m) towards the cost of the EaPConnect project, providing funding under Grant Agreement ENI/2015/356-353; the remaining 5% is being co-funded by the six beneficiary countries.

The project was officially inaugurated at the 1st Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy and is expected to have a duration of five years (until 2020). EaPConnect is managed by networking organisation GÉANT in collaboration with the NRENs in the six partner countries.

More information is available on the programme website: https://www.eapconnect.eu/

1.1 Relevant country / region / sector background

With the Eastern Partnership the EU offers its partners in the Eastern Neighbourhood concrete, far-reaching support for democratic reform, sustainable development and overall stability. The EU recognises the importance of e-infrastructures in bridging the digital divide and bringing its partners closer to the EU.

The demand for digital services to support collaboration in research and education in the region is no less than that of EU countries. All countries in the Eastern Partnership region have a large number of young and talented women and men whose future depends heavily on the speedy development of the information society, and without which their societies are likely to continue experiencing a significant brain drain. The education, cultural and scientific sectors are promising, with several centres of excellence, but these face severe limitations in the level of international collaboration with respect to their counterparts in the European Union and other world regions. Moreover it has to be noted the persistent gender inequality and lack of women in higher position in academia in the EaP region. This is a human rights concern, but also as a premise for quality higher education and innovative science.

Indeed, National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), the communication layer of e-Infrastructures, are still far from being fully developed in the Eastern Partnership region.

In this context, the provision of quality education and training as well as measures to ensure that research and innovation environments are conducive should be prioritised to support the development of compatible infrastructure and of human capacities and skills and to foster the integration into the European Research Area (ERA). Given their strong potential as enablers of "knowledge-based" societies, digital technologies should be part of the integrated response to accelerate progress in the education and research sectors. This will also contribute to social and economic development, as well as to the creation of growth and jobs.

Since 2015 the EU has been helping EaP NRENs to support the needs of the research and education communities within and across EaP countries. EaPConnect project has provided the physical connection to the pan-European GÉANT network and with the services supporting the NRENs in delivering world-class network services to the research and education community. Concretely, this has enabled researchers and students in the EaP countries to work together and exchange data with their counterparts in Europe and beyond.

1.2   The Action to be evaluated[1]

Title of the Action to be evaluated	• EaPConnect
Budget of the Action to be evaluated	• EUR 13,000,000
CRIS number of the Action to be evaluated	• ENI/2015/356-353
Dates of the Action to be evaluated	• Start: 01/07/2015 • End: 30/06/2020

According to the Description of the Action (Annex I) the overall objective of EaPConnect is to reduce the digital divide by providing an access to high-speed, highly reliable R&E network for research and education activities between the EaP region and Europe.

The EaPConnect project aims to procure, install and operate a high capacity network which is terrestrial based giving greater bandwidth and reliability. The Action also aims to promote the use of the network to the existing and potential user communities in the EaP region and provide technical support to enable them to realise the benefits of the network. A key part of the Action is to develop plans and commitment amongst the stakeholders of the target countries to sustain the project beyond the EaPConnect contract timescales.

EaPConnect project aims to deliver the following concrete outputs:

- High capacity regional R&E network for the use of the national research and education networks (NRENs) in the EaP Region.

- Network awareness and usage stimulated, applications and services supporting cooperation between the user communities in different sectors including health, education, physics, seismology, life sciences.

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[1] The term 'Action' is used throughout the report as a synonym of 'project and programme'.

- Increased number of end-users and collaborations inside the region and with Europe.

- Capacity programme that provides training and transfers technical know-how to the EaP NRENs and their staff, and facilitates the utilisation of the network by the user communities.

- Change of mind of the EaP governments with regard to the advantages of strong national networks and the need to fund such activities

- Foster the development of national research and education networking by the beneficiary countries.

- Financial model identifying costs and sources of funding, eventually financing schemes for the network in such a way, that the long-term financial viability of the network will be ensured.

- Promotion activities within the primary users of the connectivity (teachers, scientists, students and academic staff) to raise awareness and support the usage of the EaP network and its services portfolio.

EaP Connect will therefore provide essential infrastructure which will help researchers and students to carry out their projects based in their home countries, and will help stem the movement of these talented nationals to better resourced developed countries, thus stemming the 'brain drain'. It is expected to accelerate the rate at which new applications can be developed and deployed. EaPConnect will allow users to participate in global research programmes, such as the EC's Horizon 2020, where international partnerships are encouraged but which rely on good quality connectivity in order to be effective. It can therefore be expected to increase the collaborations between Europe and EaP Region.

EaPConnect is expected to play an ongoing catalytic role in the further development of national research and education networking. This effect has been a characteristic of similar regional programmes in other geographic areas.

EaPConnect is planned to provide further assistance to the participants in the beneficiary countries to improve the skill sets of their staff, particularly in the technical area to help them operate their networks effectively, but also in other areas such as commercial management and marketing. EaPConnect is also expected to foster further co-operation between the EaP region research networks and with those within other regions, e.g. Europe and other world regions, and transfer experience and expertise of research network management and organisation. It is expected to equip the participants with the capabilities to be self-sufficient and to work together to achieve long term sustainability.

The key aims of the EaPConnect programme are:

1. To establish and operate a high capacity regional network serving the needs of the user communities of the beneficiary countries;
2. To promote the use of the network for collaborative research and education programmes;
3. To build capacity and capabilities to maximise the benefit of research and education networking;
4. To promote the project to stakeholders and prepare a sustainability plan for the programme beyond EaPConnect.

The project is split into three separate consecutive phases:

1. Phase A. Inception
   Duration: up to 6 months
2. Phase B. Network Procurement
   Duration: 6-10 months
3. Phase C. Network Operations
   Duration: 48 Months

The project has seven work packages, one for the project management and six subject based work packages. Some of the work packages cover more than one phase. The philosophy of the 3 phases is that

these progressively require greater commitment and funding from the beneficiary participants, which is requested as the benefits of the programme become more clearly visible. It is a requirement of their continued participation in the Action that participants honour the commitments they make at each stage, including prompt payment of funding they have committed.

1.3 Stakeholders of the Action

The target group of the EaPConnect project are the research and educational institutions in the Eastern Partnership countries. Universities and research centres being financed from public budgets often lack resources for arranging access to the high speed, reliable R&E network providing access to the R&E organizations in Europe and worldwide.

To meet the specialised needs of research and educational institutions the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) have been created. The NRENs are organisations associating institutions from the research and education sector (universities, academic institutions, research centres) to commonly ensure digital connection for their students and researchers in sufficient capacity and on affordable terms. Grouping together into NREN type of organizations enables the cooperation with local authorities to support ICT development countrywide for all educational organisations. Moreover, in the rest of the world, the NRENs with their research potential are often the driving power of the development and testing of new information technologies.

The NRENs of EaP countries are the primary beneficiaries of the project, as they are the representatives of the education and research institutions in the area of communication technologies.

The final beneficiaries of EaPConnect network are the citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries that benefit from the access to the new information technologies and high quality scientific content. This includes improved education and research possibilities and the emerging use of information technologies in other sectors like medicine, meteorology, earth science. Broadening the use of information technologies will improve the quality of these public services, increase the openness of the region towards global developments, prevent the brain drain and contribute to the economic growth in the region.

The final beneficiary groups can range from secondary school children who have an access to Internet content from other countries in the world, to university students that can engage in more sophisticated research collaboration, to patients at a hospital or remote health centre that can be operated by a national surgeon to cure a complex or rare medical condition that requires the help of a doctor or surgeon from another part of the world. This remote assistance could be ensured via telemedicine using high-speed, highly reliable network connection.

1.4 Other available information

In 2017 a Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) review was performed in four countries (Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine). It resulted in the following main findings:

- The project is very relevant;
- The efficiency of the project is good in general;
- The project is effective and the three expected results have been partially achieved;
- However the sustainability of the project is weak because it is very unlikely that the EaP NRENs can afford the full cost of the connection to GÉANT after the project ends, and the possibility that partners' governments will cover the financial gap is equally unlikely.

In particular in Ukraine serious difficulties have been encountered with the partner URAN, facing significant financial difficulties that threatened its involvement in the action in the beginning of the project. These difficulties continue and the organisation expressed doubts on their ability to continue the activities beyond the life of the project without significant external funding support. The organisation connects around 40% of the R&E market with significant portion of the market connected to another NREN that is present in the

country, which is much more active locally and equipped to provide connectivity to the Ukrainian institutions. URAN only rarely engages other staff in the project activities despite the encouragement from project management; it does not seem to have a working relationship with the government of Ukraine hence lacks political support; it faces significant development challenges and lack of funding.

For more information see "ROM Report" in annex.

Based on the lessons learnt from EaPConnect, a second phase of the project has been designed for the period 2020/2025. The Action Document for the second phase "EU4Digital: Connecting research and education communities (EaPConnect)" should be available online (see https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/eastern-partnership/regional-cooperation_en) by the time the Final Evaluation is performed. This document is particularly relevant to the present evaluation as it includes and analysis of the lessons learnt and key challenges of EaPConnect phase 1.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION ASSIGNMENT

DG NEAR C1 is launching the final evaluation of the EaPConnect project to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, plus coherence and value added of the project. At the same time, recommendations should be elaborated, based on the findings of the evaluation, which should provide key inputs to guide the implementation of the future EaPConnect 2.

Additional information on the individual country situation can be found in the ROM report and an overview of other major complementary actions by the EU and other donors is included in the Action Document "EU4Digital: Connecting research and education communities (EaPConnect)", which will be soon adopted for the second phase of the project.

Type of evaluation	Final evaluation
Coverage	The entire action
Geographic scope	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine
Period to be evaluated	01/07/2015 - 30/06/2020

2.1 Objectives of the evaluation

Systematic and timely evaluation of its programmes and activities is an established priority[2] of the European Commission[3]. The focus of evaluations is on the assessment of achievements, the **quality** and the

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[2] COM(2013) 686 final "Strengthening the foundations of Smart Regulation – improving evaluation" - http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/docs/com_2013_686_en.pdf; EU Financial regulation (art 27); Regulation (EC) No 1905/200; Regulation (EC) No 1889/2006; Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006; Regulation (EC) No 1717/2006; Council Regulation (EC) No 215/2008

[3] SEC (2007)213 "Responding to Strategic Needs: Reinforcing the use of evaluation", http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/docs/eval_comm_sec_2007_213_en.pdf ; SWD (2015)111 "Better Regulation Guidelines", http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/swd_br_guidelines_en.pdf ; COM(2017) 651 final 'Completing the Better Regulation Agenda: Better solutions for better results', https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/completing-the-better-regulation-agenda-better-solutions-for-better-results_en.pdf

results[4] of Actions in the context of an evolving cooperation policy with an increasing emphasis on **result-oriented approaches and the contribution towards the implementation of the SDGs.**[5]

From this perspective, evaluations should **look for evidence of why, whether or how these results are linked to the EU intervention** and seek **to identify the factors driving or hindering progress**.

Evaluations should provide an understanding of the **cause and effect links** between: inputs and activities, and outputs, outcomes and impacts. Evaluations should serve accountability, decision making, learning and management purposes.

The main objectives of this evaluation are to provide the relevant services of the European Union and the interested stakeholders with:

- an overall independent assessment of the past performance of the EaPConnect, paying particular attention to its final results measured against its expected objectives; and the reasons underpinning such results;
- key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve future Actions.

In particular, this evaluation will serve to better prepare the next phase of this project during its inception phase (the new project is foreseen to start in July 2020).

The main users of this evaluation will be DG NEAR C1, DG CNECT C1 and GÉANT. Additionally, the evaluation will benefit the direct and final beneficiaries of EaPConnect 1 and 2 as well as the consortium of the next phase of the project.

2.2   Requested services

2.2.1   Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation will assess the Action using the five standard DAC evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and early signs of impact. In addition, the evaluation will assess two EU specific evaluation criteria:

- the EU added value, both regarding its design and quality of implementation;
- the coherence of the project itself, with the EU strategy in the digital sector and with other EU policies and Member States' as well as other donors' Actions.

The evaluation team shall furthermore consider whether gender, environment and climate change were mainstreamed; the relevant SDGs and their interlinkages were identified and the rights-based approach methodology was followed in the identification/formulation documents and the extent to which they have been reflected in the implementation of the Action, its governance and monitoring.

2.2.2   Issues to be addressed

The issues to be addressed as formulated below are indicative. The contractor shall verify, analyse and assess in detail the documents outlined in Annex I. The list of documents is not intended to be exhaustive. Based on the latter and following initial consultations and document analysis, the evaluation team will discuss them with the Evaluation Manager and propose in their Inception and Desk Note a complete and

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[4] *Reference is made to the entire results chain, covering outputs, outcomes and impacts. Cfr. Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 "Laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action" - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/ipa/2014/236-2014_cir.pdf.*

[5] *The New European Consensus on Development 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future', Official Journal 30th of June 2017. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2017:210:TOC*

finalised set of Evaluation Questions with indication of specific Judgement Criteria and Indicators, as well as the relevant data collection sources and tools.

The evaluation questions will be finalised in the first instance by the evaluation team during the Inception phase. Once agreed through the approval of the Inception and Desk Note, the Evaluation Questions will become contractually binding.

The questions should include/consider in their coverage the following main issues:

- The indicators developed for the programme and mentioned in the attached logframe of the programme (see Annex VI).

- The risks and assumptions defined by the programme.

<u>Assessment of implementation and results of the project</u>
a) Assess in both qualitative and quantitative terms the relevance, conditions of implementation and performance of the programme with respect to the project's objectives and the project's capacity to reach out to the target groups. The assessment will particularly focus on efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability (financial in particular), and the EU added value; on the regional aspect (regional EaP network), including some indication of achievement of higher-level results such as increased collaboration between R&E institutions, access to online international scientific publications etc., as well as identification of possible changes to be introduced in Phase 2.
b) Evaluate the complementarity with other related EU and EU Member States funded programmes in the Eastern Neighbourhood Region and H2020 and other actions funded by DG CNECT and RTD;
c) Evaluate the relevance and stability of the project partnerships, taking into consideration partners' statute, motivation, roles and expertise and assess the local ownership of the project activities;
d) Assess the visibility of project activities;

<u>Recommendations for future actions</u>
On the basis of the lessons learnt and considering the latest developments in the ENP region, the final report will include recommendations for the future EaPConnect in terms of better targeting the project and a possible re-orientation of its respective activities. These recommendations should be as far as possible coherent with the design included in the action document for EaPConnect 2 (which will be adopted by the start of the evaluation).

The contractor is required to use its professional judgment and experience to review all relevant factors and to bring these to the attention of the European Commission. The Contracting Authority will specify in the kick-off meeting the issues relating to each component of the project that require a particular attention and analysis.

2.3   Phases of the evaluation and required outputs

The evaluation process will be carried out in three phases: a combined Inception and Desk Phase, a Field Phase, and a Synthesis Phase. Deliverables in the form of reports should be submitted at the end of the corresponding phases as specified in the synoptic table below.

The outputs of each phase are to be submitted at the end of the corresponding phases as specified in the synoptic table in section 2.3.1.

2.3.1   Synoptic table

The following table presents an overview of the key activities to be conducted within each phase and lists the outputs to be produced by the team as well as the key meetings with the Contracting Authority and the Reference Group. The main content of each output is described in Chapter 5.

Phases of the evaluation	Key activities	Outputs and *meetings*
Inception and Desk Phase	• Initial document/data collection and methodological design of the evaluation (Evaluation Questions with judgement criteria, indicators and methods of data collection and analysis) and evaluation matrix. • Background analysis • Reconstruction of Intervention Logic incl. objectives • Stakeholder mapping • In-depth document analysis (focused on the Evaluation Questions) • Interviews of key stakeholders/project management • Initial meetings with Project Team • Preliminary answers to the evaluation questions and of hypotheses to be tested in the field phase • Identification of information gaps • Methodological design of the Field Phase • Report writing (& quality control)	• *Kick-off meeting with the Contracting Authority and the Reference Group in Brussels* • Inception and Desk Note
Field Phase	• Initial meetings with relevant stakeholders, among which EU DGs, partner countries and EU Delegations • Gathering of primary evidence with the use of 'the most appropriate techniques' • Data collection and analysis • Discussion of the findings of the Field Phase with relevant stakeholders	• Field Report • *Debriefing with the Reference Group in Brussels & Slide presentation* • *1 VTC , likely during mission 2 with the contracting authority* • Briefing & debriefing with EUDs
Synthesis phase	• Final analysis of findings (with focus on the Evaluation Questions) • Formulation of the overall assessment, conclusions and recommendations • Reporting	• Draft Final Report • Executive Summary according to the standard template published in the EVAL module • Final Report • *Meeting/final workshop with Reference Group in Brussels*, this should also include the project team of the EaPConnect 2 project for dissemination

2.3.2   Inception and Desk Phase

Inception

This phase aims at structuring the evaluation and clarifying the key issues to be addressed.

The phase will start with an initial background study, to be conducted by the evaluators from home. The phase will start with a kick-off session in Brussels between the Reference Group in charge of the evaluation (including NEAR C1, NEAR COTE Connectivity and other commission services such as CNECT C1, RTD, EEAS and DEVCO C5) and the evaluators. Half-day presence of the two experts is required.

The meeting aims at arriving at a clear and shared understanding of the scope of the evaluation, its limitations and feasibility. It also serves to clarify expectations regarding evaluation outputs, the methodology to be used and, where necessary, to pass on additional or latest relevant information.

In the Inception and Desk phase, the relevant documents will be reviewed (see annex II) and summarised in the Inception and Desk Note.

Further to a first desk review of the political, institutional and/or technical/cooperation framework of EU support to the region in the digital sector, the evaluation team, will reconstruct or as necessary construct, the Intervention Logic of the Action to be evaluated.

Based on the Intervention Logic the evaluators will finalise i) the Evaluation Questions with the definition of judgement criteria and indicators, the selection of data collection tools and sources, ii) the evaluation methodology, and iii) the planning of the following phases.

The methodological approach will be represented in an Evaluation Design Matrix[6], which will be included in the Inception Report. The **methodology of the evaluation should be gender sensitive**, **contemplate the use of sex- and age-disaggregated data and demonstrate how actions have contributed to progress on gender equality**.

The limitations faced or to be faced during the evaluation exercise will be discussed and mitigation measures described in the Inception and Desk Note. Finally, the work plan for the overall evaluation process will be presented and agreed in this phase; this work plan shall be in line with that proposed in the present ToR. Any modifications shall be justified and agreed with the Evaluation Manager.

Desk

The activities to be conducted during this phase should allow for the provision of preliminary responses to each evaluation question, stating the information already gathered and its limitations. They will also identify the issues still to be covered and the preliminary hypotheses to be tested.

During this phase the evaluation team shall fine-tune the evaluation tools to be used during the Field Phase and describe the preparatory steps already taken and those to be taken for its organisation, including the list of people to be interviewed, dates and itinerary of visits, and attribution of tasks within the team.

At the end of the inception and desk phase an **Inception and Desk Note** will be prepared; its content is described in Chapter 5.

2.3.3 Field Phase

The Field Phase starts after approval of the Inception and Desk Note by the Evaluation Manager.

The Field Phase aims at validating / changing the preliminary answers formulated during the Desk phase and further completing information through primary research.

If any significant deviation from the agreed work plan or schedule is perceived as creating a risk for the quality of the evaluation or not respecting the end of the validity of the specific contract, these elements

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[6] *The Evaluation Matrix is a tool to structure the evaluation analysis (by defining judgement criteria and indicators for each evaluation question). It helps also to consider the most appropriate and feasible data collection method for each of the questions,*

are to be immediately discussed with the Evaluation Manager and, regarding the validity of the contract, corrective measures undertaken.

In the first days of the field phase, the evaluation team shall hold a briefing meeting with the management, and other relevant stakeholders. The team will then visit the six partner countries in the Neighbourhood East and one EU Member State (ideally from East Europe i.e. Romania or Bulgaria, TBC during inception). The distribution of missions and days could for example look as follows:

	Team leader	Senior Expert
Preparatory Phase	8	6
Kick-off Meeting	1	1
Mission 1	5	5
Mission 2 – including a VTC with the CA	1	5
Mission 3		5
Mission 4	5	5
Mission 5		5
Mission 6		5
Mission 7		5
Debriefing with the Contracting Authority	1	1
Draft report	10	6
Final report	4	3
	35	52

During the field phase, the evaluation team shall ensure adequate contact and consultation with, and involvement of the different stakeholders; with the relevant authorities and agencies and with the EU Delegations. Throughout the mission the evaluation team will use the most reliable and appropriate sources of information, respect the rights of individuals to provide information in confidence, and be sensitive to the beliefs and customs of local social and cultural environments.

At the end of the field phase, the evaluation team will summarise its work, analyse the reliability and coverage of data collection, and present preliminary findings in a meeting with the Reference Group.

At the end of the Field Phase a Field report will be prepared; its content is described in Chapter 5.

2.3.4   Synthesis Phase

This phase is devoted to the preparation by the contractor of **two distinct documents**: the **Executive Summary** and the **Final Report**, whose structures are described in the Annex III; it entails the analysis of the data collected during the desk and field phases to answer the Evaluation Questions and preparation of the overall assessment, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

The evaluation team will present, in a single Report with Annexes, their findings, conclusions and recommendations in accordance with the structure in Annex III; a separate Executive Summary will be produced as well, following the compulsory format given in the EVAL module (see Annex III).

The evaluation team will make sure that:

- Their assessments are objective and balanced, statements are accurate and evidence-based, and recommendations realistic and clearly targeted.

- When drafting the report, they will acknowledge clearly where changes in the desired direction are known to be already taking place.

- The wording, inclusive of the abbreviations used, takes into account the audience as identified in art. 2.1 above.

The evaluation team will deliver and then present in Brussels the **Draft Final Report** to the Reference Group to discuss the draft findings, conclusions and recommendations. One day of presence is required of – as minimum - for the two Experts.

The Evaluation Manager consolidates the comments expressed by the Reference Group members and sends them to the evaluation team for the report revision, together with a first version of the Quality Assessment Grid (QAG) assessing the quality of the Draft Final Report. The content of the QAG will be discussed with the evaluation team to verify if further improvements are required, and the evaluation team will be invited to comment on the conclusions formulated in the QAG (through the EVAL Module).

The evaluation team will then finalise the **Final Report** and the **Executive Summary** by addressing the relevant comments. While potential quality issues, factual errors or methodological problems should be corrected, comments linked to diverging judgements may be either accepted or rejected. In the latter instance, the evaluation team must explain the reasons in writing. After approval of the final report, the QAG will be updated and sent to the evaluators via EVAL Module.

2.4   Specific Contract Organisation and Methodology (Technical offer)

The invited Framework Contractors will submit their specific Contract Organisation and Methodology by using the standard SIEA template B-VII-d-i and its annexes 1 and 2 (B-VII-d-ii).

The evaluation methodology proposed to undertake the assignment will be described in the Chapter 3 (Strategy and timetable of work) of the template B-VII-d-i. Contractors will describe how their proposed methodology will address the cross-cutting issues mentioned in these Terms of Reference and notably gender equality and the empowerment of women. This will include (if applicable) the communication action messages, materials and management structures.

By derogation of what is specified in the standard SIEA template B-VII-d-i, the maximum length of the specific Contract Organisation and Methodology is 7 pages, written in Times New Roman 12 or Arial size 11, single interline, excluding the framework contractor's own annexes (maximum length of such annexes: 3 pages), additional to the Annexes foreseen as part of the present Specific ToRs. The timetable is not accounted and may be presented on an A3 page.

2.5   Management and Steering of the evaluation

2.5.1   At the EU level

The evaluation is managed by Unit C1 of DG NEAR; the progress of the evaluation will be followed closely with the assistance of a Reference Group consisting of members of EU Services including DG NEAR, CNECT, RTD, EEAS, and DEVCO.

The main functions of the Reference Group are:

- To define and validate the Evaluation Questions.
- To facilitate contacts between the evaluation team and the EU services and external stakeholders.

- To ensure that the evaluation team has access to and has consulted all relevant information sources and documents related to the Action.
- To discuss and comment on notes and reports delivered by the evaluation team. Comments by individual group members are compiled into a single document by the Evaluation Manager and subsequently transmitted to the evaluation team.
- To assist in feedback on the findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations from the evaluation.
- To support the development of a proper follow-up action plan after completion of the evaluation.

2.5.2   At the Contractor level

Further to the Requirements set in the art. 6 of the Global Terms of Reference and in the Global Organisation and Methodology, respectively annexes II and III of the Framework contract SIEA 2018, the contractor is responsible for the quality of: the process; the evaluation design; the inputs and the outputs of the evaluation. In particular, it will:

- Support the Team Leader in its role, mainly from a team management perspective. In this regard, the contractor should make sure that, for each evaluation phase, specific tasks and outputs for each team member are clearly defined and understood.
- Provide backstopping and quality control of the evaluation team's work throughout the assignment.
- Ensure that the evaluators are adequately resourced to perform all required tasks within the time framework of the contract.

2.6   Language of the Specific contract

The language of the specific contract is to be English.

3   EXPERTISE REQUIRED

3.1   Number of experts and of working days per category

The table below indicates the minimum number of evaluators and the minimum number of working days (overall and in the field), per category of experts to be foreseen by the Contractor.

Category of experts	Minimum number of evaluators	Total minimum number of working days (total)	(Out of which) minimum number of working days on mission
Cat I	1	35	11
Cat II	1	52	35
Cat III	0	0	0

In particular, the Team Leader (to be identified in the Organisation and Methodology and in the Financial Offer) is expected to be a Cat I expert, possess a demonstrable senior evaluation expertise coherent with the requirements of this assignment and not provide less than 35 working days, out of which at least 11 in the field.

3.2 Expertise required

Minimum requirements of the team

Cat. I expert - Team leader:

- Masters degree, (or equivalent) in political science, science and technology or a related field. In its absence, an equivalent professional experience of at least 5 years in addition to the general professional experience.

- Minimum 10 years of experience in the field of EC international cooperation, of which preferably 3 years in the Eastern Neighbourhood.

- At least 20 project/programme evaluations of which at least three evaluations in the field of research and education in the last five years (three references to be given with the name of the relevant evaluation manager, directorate and unit).

- Strong experience with the principles and working methods of project cycle management and EC aid delivery methods, in particular the logical framework approach (including relevant indicators).

- Strong interpersonal skills and capacity to work with programmes and to liaise with parties concerned by the programme, including beneficiaries.

Cat. II expert - Research and Education expert:

- Masters degree (or equivalent) in science and technology studies or a related field. In its absence, an equivalent professional experience of at least 5 years in addition to the general professional experience.

- At least 5 years professional experience in the field of research and education, including fields such as physics, astronomy, health and medicine, energy, arts and education, e-infrastructure strategies, open science, advanced networking services for trusted access, etc.

- Strong interpersonal skills and capacity to work with programmes and to liaise with parties concerned by the programme, including beneficiaries.

- Proven experience in the European Neighbourhood Instrument/ European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument is an asset.

Language skills of the team:

- English: Full working knowledge of English (minimum C1) and excellent report writing skills (minimum C1) for both experts.
- Russian: the knowledge of Russian is considered an advantage for Expert 1 (Team Leader) and an asset for Expert 2 (Research and Education expert).

Languages levels are defined for understanding, speaking and writing skills by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages available at https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/resources/european-language-levels-cefr and shall be demonstrated by certificates or by past relevant experience.

The European Union pursues an equal opportunities policy. Gender balance in the proposed team, at all levels, is highly recommended.

3.3 Presence of management team for briefing and/or debriefing

The presence of member(s) of the management team is not required for briefing or debriefing.

4   LOCATION AND DURATION

4.1   Starting period

Provisional start of the assignment is mid-January 2020.

4.2   Foreseen duration of the assignment in calendar days

Maximum duration of the assignment: 180 calendar days.

This overall duration includes working days, week-ends, periods foreseen for comments, for review of draft versions, debriefing sessions, and distribution of outputs.

4.3   Planning, including the period for notification for placement of the staff[7]

As part of the technical offer, the framework contractor must fill in the timetable in the Annex IV (to be finalised in the Inception and Desk Report). The 'Indicative dates' are not to be formulated as fixed dates but rather as days (or weeks, or months) from the beginning of the assignment (to be referenced as '0').

Sufficient forward planning is to be taken into account in order to ensure the active participation and consultation with government representatives, national / local or other stakeholders.

4.4   Location(s) of assignment

The assignment will take place in in Brussels, home base will be possible for the experts, with field visits in all six Eastern Partner Countries and in one EU Member State.

5   REPORTING

5.1   Content, timing and submission

The outputs must match quality standards. The text of the reports should be illustrated, as appropriate, with maps, graphs and tables; a map of the area(s) of Action is required (to be attached as Annex).

List of outputs:

	Number of Pages *(excluding annexes)*	Main Content	Timing for submission

Inception and Desk Note	10 pages	• Intervention logic
		• Stakeholder map
		• Methodology for the evaluation, incl.:
		  o Evaluation Matrix: Evaluation Questions, with judgement criteria and indicators, and data analysis and collection methods
		  o Consultation strategy
		  o Field visit approach
		• Analysis of risks related to the evaluation methodology and mitigation measures
		• Work plan
			End of Inception and Desk Phase

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[7] *As per art 16.4 a) of the General Conditions of the Framework Contract SIEA*

	Number of Pages (excluding annexes)	Main Content	Timing for submission
		• Preliminary answers to each Evaluation Question, with indication of the limitations of the available information • Data gaps to be addressed, issues still to be covered and hypotheses to be tested during the field visit	
Field Report	5 pages per country + 5 pages background	• Activities conducted during the field phase • Difficulties encountered during the field phase and mitigation measures adopted • Key preliminary findings (combining desk and field ones)	End of the Field Phase
Draft Final Report	20 pages	• **Cf. detailed structure in Annex III**	End of Synthesis Phase
Draft Executive Summary – by using the EVAL online template	N/A	• **Cf. detailed structure in Annex III**	End of Synthesis Phase
Final report	20 pages	• Same specifications as of the Draft Final Report, incorporating any comments received from the concerned parties on the draft report that have been accepted	2 weeks after having received comments to the Draft Final Report.
Executive Summary – by using the EVAL online template	N/A	• Same specifications as for the Draft Executive Summary, incorporating any comments received from the concerned parties on the draft report that have been accepted	Together with the final version of the Final Report

5.2 Use of the EVAL module by the evaluators

It is strongly recommended that the **submission of deliverables** by the selected contractor **be performed through their uploading in the EVAL Module**, an evaluation process management tool and repository of the European Commission. The selected contractor will receive access to online and offline guidance in order to operate with the module during the related Specific contract validity.

5.3 Comments on the outputs

For each report, the Evaluation Manager will send to the Contractor consolidated comments received from the Reference Group or the approval of the report within 15 calendar days. The revised reports addressing the comments shall be submitted within 10 calendar days from the date of receipt of the comments. The evaluation team should provide a separate document explaining how and where comments have been integrated or the reason for not integrating certain comments, if this is the case.

5.4 Assessment of the quality of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary

The quality of the draft versions of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary will be assessed by the Evaluation Manager using the online Quality Assessment Grid (QAG) in the EVAL Module (text provided in Annex V). The Contractor is given – through the EVAL module - the possibility to comment on the assessments formulated by the Evaluation Manager. The QAG will then be reviewed following the submission of the final version of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary.

The compilation of the QAG will support/inform the compilation by the Evaluation Manager of the FWC SIEA's Specific Contract Performance Evaluation.

5.5 Language

All reports shall be submitted in English.

5.6 Number of report copies

Apart from their submission -preferably via the EVAL Module-, the approved version of the Final Report will be also provided in electronic version Word and PDF format sent by e-mail at no extra cost.

5.7 Formatting of reports

All reports will be produced using Font Arial or Times New Roman minimum letter size 11 and 12 respectively, single spacing, double sided. They will be sent in Word and PDF formats.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: SPECIFIC TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

SPECIFIC TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Request for Services n. 2019/411202/1

Final Evaluation of the Eastern Partnership Connect (EaPConnect) project

FWC SIEA 2018 - LOT 4 – Human Development and safety net

EuropeAid/138778/DH/SER/multi

1. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Contracting Authority selects the offer with the best value for money using an 80/20 weighting between technical quality and price[8].

Technical quality is evaluated on the basis of the following grid:

Criteria	Maximum
Total score for Organisation and Methodology	*50*
• Understanding of ToR and the aim of the services to be provided	10
• Overall methodological approach, quality control approach, appropriate mix of tools and estimate of difficulties and challenges	25
• Technical added value, backstopping and role of the involved members of the consortium	5
• Organisation of tasks including timetable	10
Score for the expertise of the proposed team	*50*
OVERALL TOTAL SCORE	*100*

2. TECHNICAL THRESHOLD

Any offer falling short of the technical threshold of 75 out of 100 points, is automatically rejected.

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[8] *For more details about the 80/20 rule, please see the PRAG, chapter 3.3.10.5 - https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-funding-and-procedures/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag_en*

ANNEX II: INFORMATION THAT WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE EVALUATION TEAM

- Legal texts and political commitments pertaining to the Action to be evaluated

- Regional Strategy Paper and Indicative Programmes (and equivalent) for the periods covered

- Action Document for phase 1 and phase 2

- Description of the Action (Annex I to the contract ENI/2015/356-353)

- Inception report

- Interim progress reports

- European Commission's Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Reports, and other external and internal monitoring reports of the Action

- Audit report

- Minutes of all the Steering Committee Meetings of the Action

- Relevant documentation from National/Local partners and other donors

- Guidance for Gender sensitive evaluations

- Any other relevant document

Note: The evaluation team has to identify and obtain any other document worth analysing, through independent research and during interviews with relevant informed parties and stakeholders of the Action.

ANNEX III: STRUCTURE OF THE FINAL REPORT AND OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The contractor will deliver – **preferably through their uploading in the EVAL Module** - **two distinct documents**: the **Final Report** and the **Executive Summary**. They must be consistent, concise and clear and free of linguistic errors both in the original version and in their translation – if foreseen.

The Final Report should not be longer than the number of pages indicated in Chapter 6. Additional information on the overall context of the Action, description of methodology and analysis of findings should be reported in an Annex to the main text.

The presentation must be properly spaced and the use of clear graphs, tables and short paragraphs is strongly recommended.

The cover page of the Final Report shall carry the following text:

''*This evaluation is supported and guided by the European Commission and presented by [name of consulting firm]. The report does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Commission*''.

Executive Summary	A short, tightly-drafted, to-the-point and free-standing Executive Summary. It should focus on the key purpose or issues of the evaluation, outline the main analytical points, and clearly indicate the main conclusions, lessons to be learned and specific recommendations. It is to be prepared by using the specific format foreseen in the EVAL Module.

The main sections of the evaluation report shall be as follows:

1. Introduction	A description of the Action, of the relevant country/region/sector background and of the evaluation, providing the reader with sufficient methodological explanations to gauge the credibility of the conclusions and to acknowledge limitations or weaknesses, where relevant.
2. Answered questions / Findings	A chapter presenting the answers to the Evaluation Questions, supported by evidence and reasoning.
3. Overall assessment *(optional)*	A chapter synthesising all answers to Evaluation Questions into an overall assessment of the Action. The detailed structure of the overall assessment should be refined during the evaluation process. The relevant chapter has to articulate all the findings, conclusions and lessons in a way that reflects their importance and facilitates the reading. The structure should not follow the Evaluation Questions, the logical framework or the evaluation criteria.
4. Conclusions and Recommendations	

4.3 Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt generalise findings and translate past experience into relevant knowledge that should support decision making, improve performance and promote the achievement of better results. Ideally, they should support the work of both the relevant European and partner institutions.

4.1 Conclusions

This chapter contains the conclusions of the evaluation, organised per evaluation criterion.

In order to allow better communication of the evaluation messages that are addressed to the Commission, a table organising the conclusions by order of importance can be presented, or a paragraph or sub-chapter emphasizing the 3 or 4 major conclusions organised by order of importance, while avoiding being repetitive.

4.2 Recommendations

They are intended to improve or reform the Action in the framework of the cycle under way, or to prepare the design of a new Action for the next cycle.

Recommendations must be clustered and prioritised, and carefully targeted to the appropriate audiences at all levels, especially within the Commission structure.

5. Annexes to the report

The report should include the following annexes:

- The Terms of Reference of the evaluation
- The names of the evaluators (CVs can be shown, but summarised and limited to one page per person)
- Detailed evaluation methodology including: options taken, difficulties encountered and limitations; detail of tools and analyses.
- Evaluation Matrix
- Intervention logic / Logical Framework matrices (planned/real and improved/updated)
- Relevant geographic map(s) where the Action took place
- List of persons/organisations consulted
- Literature and documentation consulted
- Other technical annexes (e.g. statistical analyses, tables of contents and figures, matrix of evidence, databases) as relevant
- Detailed answer to the Evaluation Questions, judgement criteria and indicators

ANNEX IV: PLANNING SCHEDULE

This annex must be included by Framework Contractors in their Specific Contract Organisation and Methodology and forms an integral part of it. Framework Contractors can add as many rows and columns as needed.

The phases of the evaluation shall reflect those indicated in the present Terms of Reference.

Activity	Location	Indicative Duration in working days[9]		Indicative Dates
		Team Leader	Evaluator …	
Inception phase: total days				
•				
•				
Desk phase: total days				
•				
•				
Field phase: total days				
•				
•				
Synthesis phase: total days				
•				
•				
Dissemination phase: total days				
•				
•				
TOTAL working days (maximum)				

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[9] Add one column per each evaluator

ANNEX V: QUALITY ASSESSMENT GRID

The quality of the Final Report will be assessed by the Evaluation Manager (since the submission of the draft Report and Executive Summary) using the following quality assessment grid, which is included **in the EVAL Module**; the grid will be shared with the evaluation team, which will have the possibility to include their comments.

Action (Project/Programme) evaluation – Quality Assessment Grid Final Report			
Evaluation data			
Evaluation title			
Evaluation managed by		**Type of evaluation**	
CRIS ref. of the evaluation contract		**EVAL ref.**	
Evaluation budget			
EUD/Unit in charge		**Evaluation Manager**	
Evaluation dates	**Start:**	**End:**	
Date of draft final report		**Date of Response of the Services**	
Comments			
Project data			
Main project evaluated			
CRIS # of evaluated project(s)			
DAC Sector			
Contractor's details			
Evaluation Team Leader		**Evaluation Contractor**	
Evaluation expert(s)			

Legend: scores and their meaning

Very satisfactory: criterion entirely fulfilled in a clear and appropriate way
Satisfactory: criterion fulfilled

Unsatisfactory: criterion partly fulfilled
Very unsatisfactory: criterion mostly not fulfilled or absent

The evaluation report is assessed as follows

1. Clarity of the report

This criterion analyses the extent to which both the Executive Summary and the Final Report:

- Are easily readable, understandable and accessible to the relevant target readers
- Highlight the key messages
- The length of the various chapters and annexes of the Report are well balanced
- Contain relevant graphs, tables and charts facilitating understanding
- Contain a list of acronyms (only the Report)
- Avoid unnecessary duplications
- Have been language checked for unclear formulations, misspelling and grammar errors
- The Executive Summary is an appropriate summary of the full report and is a free-standing document

Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

2. Reliability of data and robustness of evidence

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- Data/evidence was gathered as defined in the methodology
- The report considers, when relevant, evidence from EU and/or other partners' relevant studies, monitoring reports and/or evaluations
- The report contains a clear description of the limitations of the evidence, the risks of bias and the mitigating measures

Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

3. Validity of Findings

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- Findings derive from the evidence gathered
- Findings address all selected evaluation criteria
- Findings result from an appropriate triangulation of different, clearly identified sources

Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
• When assessing the effect of the EU intervention, the findings describe and explain the most relevant cause/effect links between outputs, outcomes and impacts • The analysis of evidence is comprehensive and takes into consideration contextual and external factors		
Contractor's comments	**Contractor's comments**	

4. Validity of conclusions

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- Conclusions are logically linked to the findings, and go beyond them to provide a comprehensive analysis
- Conclusions appropriately address the selected evaluation criteria and all the evaluation questions, including the relevant cross-cutting dimensions
- Conclusions take into consideration the various stakeholder groups of the evaluation
- Conclusions are coherent and balanced (i.e. they present a credible picture of both strengths and weaknesses), and are free of personal or partisan considerations
- (If relevant) whether the report indicates when there are not sufficient findings to conclude on specific issues

Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	**Contractor's comments**	

5. Usefulness of recommendations

This criterion analyses the extent to which the recommendations:

- Are clearly linked to and derive from the conclusions
- Are concrete, achievable and realistic
- Are targeted to specific addressees
- Are clustered (if relevant), prioritised, and possibly time-bound
- (If relevant) provide advice for the Action's exit strategy, post-Action sustainability or for adjusting Action's design or plans

Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	**Contractor's comments**	

6. Appropriateness of lessons learnt analysis *(if requested by the ToR or included by the evaluators)*	
This criterion is to be assessed only when requested by the ToR or included by evaluators and is not to be scored. It analyses the extent to which: • Lessons are identified • When relevant, they are generalised in terms of wider relevance for the institution(s)	ⓘ

Strengths	Weaknesses
Contractor's comments	**Contractor's comments**

Final comments on the overall quality of the report	Overall score

ANNEX VI: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX (LOGFRAME) OF THE EVALUATED ACTION(S)

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROJECT				
	Intervention logic	**Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement**	**Sources and means of verification**	**Assumptions**
Overall objectives	Decrease the digital divide and contribute to the support of science, education and research sector in the EAP region			The underlying assumption here, which is widely accepted, is that improved access to ICTs at any level has a major positive impact on the support of science, education and research sector.
Specific objective	SO1: Creation of the Eastern Partnership **Research and Education Network** and connecting it to NRENs in the region as well as towards the pan-European network for research and education GEANT. SO2: Procure and federate the **access to high quality scientific content** for the region (publications,	SO1: a) Improved overall availability, target of: 50% b) All EaP NRENs connected to the GEANT backbone SO2: Number of Regional research and education institutions and Communities utilizing services and having access to the scientific content	SO1: Network **Statistics, Traffic Graphs, and Project Reports** SO2: Usage Statistics and Project Reports SO3: Usage Statistics and Project Reports	a) Participating countries will make the requisite **payments** towards project beneficiary contribution b) There is **service provider** infrastructure that can be procured at competitive prices based on short or

	web services, software, educational materials, etc) SO3: Establish and deploy **eduroam** along with the Authentication and Authorisation Infrastructure and stimulate integration towards GEANT services providing support to e-infrastructures and collaboration activities. SO4: Improved **institutional capacity** of EAP NRENs and long term sustainability SO5: Increase the access to high capacity R&E networks and foster the exchange of information between the research and education communities in the EaP countries and Europe	Target: 2 Identity providers per countries in the first year of operation of the service SO3: a) All Countries operating Eduroam after the end of year 2 SO4; Number of joint events in the Region: 2 SO5: Increased traffic volume and/or increased number of additional users, projects utilizing the network infrastructure and services	SO4: Project Reports; Independent Reports from User Communities SO5: Usage Statistics and Project Reports	long-term leases to provide both connectivity and resilience to existing connections c) User Communities will be sufficiently organized to take up services d) The 6 EAP NRENs will be mutually willing to work towards technical and organizational collaboration that will lead to a transparent network
Expected results	R1 – Creation and consolidation of the **EaPConnect network**, including the inclusion of new e-infrastructure **services** R2 – Increased intra-regional and international communication and collaboration between research centres and universities, including	R1.1 All countries connected at the end of year 2 R1.2 At least one new infrastructure service implemented for example eduRoam, by the end of year 2	R1.1: Project Reports and Traffic Graphs R1.2: Project Reports and usage statistics R2: Traffic Graphs and Project Reports	a) Participating countries will make the requisite payments towards project beneficiary contribution b) Researchers within and outside EAP region will seize the

	the increased use of **online applications for research cooperation** R3 – Increase responsibility of EAP actors in the EaPConnect network and overall improved **institutional capacity** of EAP NRENs and towards self-sustainability	R2: Increasing volume of traffic within the region and with the rest of the world R3: At least 3 NRENs to move from organizational and infrastructure readiness to H2020 readiness (operation and financial) at the end of the project	R3:EAP Connect Annual Reports; Project Reports; and Traffic Graphs from NRENs, EaPConnect and GEANT	opportunity of improved connectivity as well as access to advanced applications to engage in research collaboration c) There will be continuing political, regulatory, and financial support to NRENs and institutions' IT and ICT from national governments and governmental institutions. d) The impact of the regional political and economic situation on the project is minimal
Activities	A1.1: Design of the **most cost-effective technical solution for the network;** A1.2: **Procuremen**t of the network from telecom providers;	A1.1: EaPConnect NRENs, GEANT and EU-NRENs Technical **Staff time** A1.2: EaPConnect NRENs and EU NREN **staff (time)** working with GEANT procurement experts; Connectivity and Equipment from contracted service providers	Progress on all these activities will be available in the following ways: a) **Reports** given to the bi-annual project administrative meetings and also posted on the project Intranet b) For specific events and activities**, reports** at the time of	A1.1: None A1.2: Internal – EaPConnect NRENs making their counterpart contribution; External –

	A1.3: **Network management** to provide stable services; A1.4: Deployment of new e-infrastructure **services** (Identity Federation and Eduroam); A1.5: Developing and running **training** and capacity building activities for the creation and consolidation of the **NRENs** A2.1: **Promotion of the use of the network to the end-users** (students, researchers, doctors); A2.2: Increasing **political dialogue** to raise the political and financial support to the connectivity issues; A2.3: Development and provision of **ICT applications** for the use of the research and education community. A2.4: **Awareness raising** and promoting the project to potential users and projects. A3.1 Prepare **handover** of the administrative, financial and	A1.3: Establish **EaPConnect NOC** as part of the action staffed by EAP Connect Technical Staff (time); working with Outsourced NOC services during a capacity building phase A1.4: EaPConnect NRENs Technical Staff working with contracted expertise; Equipment and applications from contracted vendors; Colocation services procured at a high availability location; Capacity building for relevant EaPConnect NRENs personnel requiring travel and per diems A1.5: Travel, per diems, and related costs for joint training events; hardware and application training resources from vendors; EaPConnect NRENs and training partners staff time. Number of trained staff from EAP; Number of events.	closure posted on the Project Intranet c) **Annual Progress Reports** that will comprehensively cover the progress during each year of implementation. *COSTS THE ACTION:* *Please refer to the detailed budget where these are broken down*	Timely release of funds by EC A1.3: Internal – Agreed location of the NOC and staff to be trained in NOC operation A1.4: External – Availability of NREN staff for training A1.5: External – Availability of NREN staff for training; Availability of expert external capacity building partners A2: None A3.1: Internal – managerial and technical readiness of the EaPConnect NRENs to prepare management and

	operational activities from GEANT to the EAP NRENs; A3.2: **Awareness raising** and promoting the project to potential funding organisations and national governments	A2.1, A2.2, A2.4, and A3.2: Communication materials and resources; travel and per diems for occasional face to face engagement especially at stakeholder events or for high level meetings; EaPConnect NRENs and GEANT staff time; Number of outreach events; Number of high-level political meetings. One regional-level network launch and closure event. A2.3: Hardware and applications (from contracted vendors) for hosting applications and services, along with procured colocation services at high availability locations; EaPConnect NRENs and EU NREN staff time A3.1: GEANT and EaPConnect NRENs staff time; travel and per diems for face to face meetings and capacity building		operational responsibility A3.2: None