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 Austrian
Development
Cooperation

EU4Rivers

 Austrian
Development
Agency

EU4Rivers Project

ADA Contract Number: 6532-00/2023 SUB 06/2025

Terms of Reference

National Expert in Aquatic Ecosystem Ecology – Benthic Invertebrates

- **Objective:** The primary objective of the consultancy is to support the development of RBMPs through biological quality elements (benthic invertebrates) monitoring under the EU WFD requirements.
- **Commissioner:** EU4Rivers Team Leader
- **Timeframe:** April – December 2025 (50 days)
- **Location:** Albania, Tirana

1. Background

Austrian Development Agency (ADA), as the Operational Unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), has been delegated by the European Union (EU) to implement the "EU4RIVERS" project in Albania from October 2023 to September 2028. The lead Beneficiary is the Albanian Water Resources Management Agency (AMBU).

The general objective is to enhance the implementation of the National Water Reform and Albania progress towards meeting EU water legislation requirements, resulting in increased capacities for managing the sector in line with EU policies. The specific objective is to increase Albania's approximation with the EU water acquis.

The project Outputs are:

- **Output 1:** The overarching Integrated Water Management legal and institutional framework is substantially enhanced in accordance with the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and other water-related directives.
- **Output 2:** The Implementation of River Basin Management (RBM) is increased in all river basins in line with the requirements of the WFD.
- **Output 3:** Water monitoring, reporting and enforcement are sustainably enhanced in line with the requirements of water-related EU Directives.

2. Objective and description of the assignment

This assignment's objective is to support the implementation of freshwater ecological monitoring and assessment, focusing on benthic invertebrates, in accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). It aims to support the preparation and implementation of a monitoring framework, screening of existing methodologies, field protocols, and a preliminary assessment of benthic invertebrates. The assignment will contribute toward the achievements of project Output 2.

3. Approach and Methodology

The Contractor will operate under the guidance of the EU4Rivers Team Leader (TL), and in close cooperation with a group of international and national experts, with EU4Rivers PMT and key staff from relevant monitoring institutions following AQEM Protocol (2002) for field and lab procedures.



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The Contractor shall contribute to the status assessment of water bodies in three river basins (Drin-Bune, Shkumbin and Seman), review of existing methodologies, field sampling strategies, and data analysis for Macrozoobenthos in river water bodies to evaluate the ecological health of aquatic ecosystems.

The campaigns will be performed in representative sites in the Drin-Bune river basin, Shkumbin river basin and Seman river basin, to assess river water quality. The Contractor will focus on ensuring that benthic invertebrate data is collected, well labelled, fixed with formalin (4% end concentration), analysed, and reported in compliance with EU WFD standards. After processing the samples have to be stored and handed to the project team at the end of the contract. This work will feed the preliminary status assessment of WBs in order to help the preparation of WFD-compliant RBMPs through performing tailor-made campaigns, as described below:

(i) Sampling campaigns

- Phase 1: Drin-Bune and Seman river basins, tentatively in April-May 2025;
- Phase 2: Shkumbin river basin, tentatively in September 2025.

(ii) Lab work on species identification

- Phase 1: Drin-Bune and Seman river basins, tentatively June-September 2025;
- Phase 2: Shkumbin river basin, tentatively October-December 2025.

Task 1 – Preparatory work for monitoring of benthic invertebrates

The Contractor shall follow the AQEM Protocols (2002) for laboratory analysis, including sample handling, preservation, sorting, and identification, applicable to selected river basins under this assignment.

Task 2 – Representative monitoring on benthic invertebrates

The Contractor is expected to:

- Perform monitoring in the identified sites ensuring adequate spatial and temporal coverage.
- Ensure that sampling and lab methods are in line with WFD standards.
- Taxonomic resolution: family or genus level.
- Data analysis using the most common standard metrics e.g. Hering et al. (2006).
- Assist in the development of maps and visual representations of data to illustrate spatial patterns and status across river basins.



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4. Deliverables

The Contractor shall provide the respective deliverables as per the timelines given below:

	Deliverable	Submission date
1	Technical report on Benthic Invertebrate (Drine-Bune RB)	September 2025
2	Technical report on Benthic Invertebrate (Seman RB)	September 2025
3	Technical report on Benthic Invertebrate (Shkumbin RB)	December 2025

5. Location and Duration of the assignment

The assignment is planned to commence in April 2025. The duration of the assignment is 50 working days over a period of 9 months.

A detailed draft of the work plan for the assignment shall be prepared.

In case of changes in the overall project implementation and changes to the work plan in line with project needs/requested by the TL, this will not affect the total number of working days for the assignment.

6. Reporting

A draft work plan shall be submitted for approval to the TL within two weeks of the contract's entry into force. The work plan describes the tasks, activities, meetings/workshops, reports/deliverables, and any other inputs to be performed during the assignment. All the tasks shall be discussed and agreed upon in advance with the TL.

Progress Report(s) will be prepared monthly and submitted to the TL, which describe the accomplished work, and the progress achieved towards the agreed tasks/outputs, and any risks that may compromise project implementation. Each report should also include the number of working days performed in the preceding month.

A Final report shall be submitted at the latest two weeks after the end date of implementation of the services as defined in the Service Contract. The report includes a description of the delivered outputs, all tasks carried out as well as recommendations / observations made related to the project implementation.

All reports and any other documentation to be produced as part of this assignment shall be submitted in **English**.

7. Contacts

EU4Rivers Project - Contacts:
Rr. Pjeter Budi, P. Klasik. Shk. 1, Ap 11, Tirana
Phone: +355 (0) 4 450 3200
e-mail: eu4rivers@ada.gv.at

8. Requirements for the contractor

Qualifications and skills

- Master degree in Environmental Science, Conservation Science, Ecology, Limnology, or equivalent or five (5) years above the General Professional Experience required.
- Fluency in English (both written and spoken).
- Excellent communication skills;
- Excellent problem-solving, negotiation, and influencing skills.



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General Professional Experience

- Ideally, 7 (seven) years of professional experience in aquatic ecosystem monitoring and management.
- Experience with the implementation of the EU WFD, particularly in relation to biological quality elements and water quality assessment.

Specific professional experience

- Ideally, 5 (five) years of significant experience in benthic invertebrate ecology and water quality assessment;
- Demonstrated knowledge of benthic invertebrate monitoring under the Ecoregion where Albania pertains.

The Contractor must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities defined by the Terms of Reference.

9. Evaluation Criteria

Every eligible offer submission will be evaluated according to the following award criteria and the associated weights.

Criterion 1 ⁱ	Criterion 2 ⁱ	Criterion 3 ⁱ	Criterion 4	Criterion 5
<i>Qualifications and Skills</i>	<i>General Professional experience</i>	<i>Specific Professional experience</i>	<i>Methodology and approach</i>	<i>Offered Price</i>
10%	20%	35%	15%	20%

i) Wherever years of experience are requested, the bidder with the preferred experience will receive the full points under this sub criterion, all other bidders scores will be scaled accordingly.

Criteria 1-4 are applied to the technical proposal (total weight 80%), Criterion 5 is applied to the financial proposal (total weight 20%). Evaluation of offers will be made in accordance with the best bidder principle. The quality related award criteria will be applied by an Evaluation Commission consisting of 3 members. For each quality criterion a maximum score of 10 points can be achieved.

Criteria 1-5: offers are scored in a manner that the offer with the highest score in the criterion obtains the maximum number of points (100 points multiplied with the respective weight) and each next offer the proportionally lower number of points according to the following formula:

Points Criterion 1/2/3/4 = (Individual score of the offer/ score of the offer with the highest score) x maximum points

Points Criterion 5: offers are scored depending on their price (offered total price) in the manner that the offer with the lowest total price obtains the maximum number of points (20 points) and each next offer the proportionally lower number of points according to the following formula:

Points Criterion 5 = (Lowest total price/ total price of offer) x maximum points

Calculation of total points:



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Total points = Points Criterion 1 + Points Criterion 2 + Points Criterion 3 + Points Criterion 4 + Points Criterion 5

The best offer is the offer with the highest number of total points. If the number of total points is the same for more than one bidder, the offer with the lowest total price (amongst these bidders) shall be the most favourable offer.

10. Representation

Any kind of representation of ADA / the EU4Rivers Project and EU Delegation by the Contractor is excluded from this agreement.

11. Publication

The Contractor agrees that the following information will be made public as required by the General Conditions to the European Community Delegation Agreement: title and type of the contract, name, address and nationality of the contractor, and amount of the contract.