

Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Social Risk Assessment and Management Specialist

1. Background

Serbia has received a loan from the World Bank (WB) for the Project Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship (SAIGE)¹ (hereafter: Project) to support the strengthening of the Serbian Innovation and Entrepreneurship ecosystem. The main objective of the Project is to improve (i) the relevance and excellence of scientific research; and (ii) innovative entrepreneurship and access to finance for enterprise growth, as a way of contributing to Serbia's growth and competitiveness. The European Union Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA-II) is also providing complimentary financing support for the SAIGE Project. The Project includes the following three components:

Component 1: Research Sector Reforms – (i) Operationalization of Science Fund including capacity building, and design and implementation of Science Fund grant instruments, and provision of competitive grants to researchers; (ii) Research and Development Institutes (RDIs) reforms through independent evaluation, preparation and implementation of transformation plans, as well as policy development support to Ministry; (iii) Design of Serbian Diaspora Facility and provision of grants for visits and joints projects with diaspora.

Component 2: Enterprise Acceleration – Establishment of Katapult Program, a co-investment fund and acceleration program, including the provision of technical assistance facility necessary for the program execution.

Component 3: Project Implementation, Monitoring, and Capacity Building.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) until October 2022 was responsible for the overall Project coordination and implementation and execution of Component 1.2 RDI Reforms. After the April 2022 elections, a new line ministry – Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation (NITRA, hereinafter: the Client) has been tasked (in October 2022) as the successor, with the overall Project coordination and implementation. The Project is coordinated (and implemented) by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at NITRA comprising a PIU manager, project officers for the three Project components, experts for environmental and social standards, including ethics, M&E and RDI transformation officer, and other technical and administrative staff.

In addition to the above, in mid-2023, Serbia requested allocation of additional funds for the SAIGE Project to support artificial intelligence (AI) development in Serbia in support of Serbia's commitment to AI development, recognizing the importance of AI, digitalization, and robotics in various sectors, including the economy, healthcare, public services, the environment, etc. specifically focusing on the legal framework, enhancing workforce skills in AI, and improving the regulatory environment, coverage of AI topics in education and research, and the availability of computing power.

Serbia's high-level plan is to support AI programs/activities by allocating additional funds that will focus on three main areas: green development based on IT (green transition), transport systems and the auto industry (e-mobility), and the application of AI in clinical medicine (clinical healthcare).

¹ <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P170185> and <https://nitra.gov.rs/cir/inovacije/projekat-saige>

This plan also includes support for Innovation Fund and Science Fund AI programs, capacity building for the AI institute and BIO4, the development of an AI investment promotion platform, activities related to regulations, support to innovation development, hackathons, grant schemes, innovation vouchers, training programs and capacity building among others. The Science Fund (SF) and Innovation Fund (IF) are planning to support enterprises and scientific researchers through grants in deploying artificial intelligence (AI) and cutting-edge technologies to drive innovation and improve services.

The Project has an effective Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) which outlines measures and actions needed for the effective management of environmental and social issues throughout the life of a project, ensuring compliance with the Bank's standards and the borrower's environmental and social commitments.

The Client intends to engage a full-time consultant (individual local expert) to provide services as Social Risk Specialist and serve as the main PIU focal person responsible for ensuring that social aspect of the project implementation is in line with relevant World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework standards, principles and policies.

2. Objectives

The primary objective of the assignment is to assist the Client in identifying, evaluating, and mitigating potential social risks associated with the Project. This effort aims to ensure compliance with World Bank (WB) social standards while promoting socially responsible project implementation. The task includes assessing the potential impacts of project activities on local communities, stakeholders, and broader society, as well as avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating adverse impacts and risks.

The specialist will closely collaborate with:

- Science Fund (SF) on assessing and managing social risks associated with scientific research grants, including AI research grant subprojects;
- Innovation Fund (IF) on assessing and managing social risks associated with acceleration programs;
- BIO4 Campus on assessing and managing social risks associated with the Project financed activities related to BIO4 campus;
- AI Institute on assessing and managing social risks associated with the Project financed activities related to the operation of the AI institute;
- Client/PIU on assessing and managing social risks associated with technology transfer projects funded through Research and Development Institutes (RDI) transformation.

The objective of this role is to enhance the scientific community's ability to conduct research in a socially responsible manner. This involves upholding social standards, obtaining informed consent, and considering the wider societal impacts of research outcomes. Additionally, this role will contribute to building trust between researchers, stakeholders, and the general public by encouraging collaboration and transparency are aligned with public interest and welfare. By fostering these practices, the project aims to achieve lasting benefits for both the community and society at large.

3. Scope of Work

The Social Risk Assessment Specialist will be responsible for the following tasks:

3.1. Social Risk Assessment

3.1.1. Assessment of Science Fund (SF) and Innovation Fund (IF) grants applications and Tech Transfer projects supported through RDI transformation

- In collaboration with SF, IF, and PIU environmental and ethical experts, and in accordance with the Project ESMF² assesses the potential social risks of grant proposals for scientific research projects, RDIs in transformation, and acceleration programs.
- In addition, specifically for AI-related Research Grants:
 - After an AI specialist assesses the risks of the proposed AI research, identify the intended uses of AI systems that may be particularly sensitive and impactful on individuals and society.
 - Identify the stakeholders for the AI system intended use, and for each stakeholder, document the potential benefits and potential harms.

3.1.2. Comprehensive Assessment of social risks associated with the Project-funded AI Institute and BIO4 Campus activities

- Assess the potential social impacts—both positive and negative—and identify any downstream social risks to local communities and society at large associated with the Project-funded AI Institute and BIO4 activities.
- Within the first 3-6 months of engagement to prepare and clear a concise Project Social Impact Assessment report that includes guidance on managing identified risks and impacts.
- Continual social risks monitoring and reporting.

3.2. Social Risk Mitigation

- Categorize the assessed social risks using the Project ESMF risk hierarchy and outline appropriate measures to address the identified social risks.
- Assist grant recipients in creating Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other suitable tools to manage social risks.
- For AI research grants deemed particularly socially sensitive and impactful, with the support of an AI Risk Specialist help grantees identify interested and affected parties and conduct meaningful consultation during research and/or deployment of AI systems.
- Guide grantees in incorporating feedback received from stakeholders by establishing a clear and structured process for reviewing comments, prioritizing suggestions based on project goals and resource availability, and communicating changes back to the stakeholders to ensure transparency and continued engagement.

3.3. Information disclosure, Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

Social Expert will suggest ways to support effective and transparent communication about the project activities by providing clear and accessible information, using multiple communication channels to reach a diverse audience, and engaging in active dialogue with stakeholders. He/she will:

- Cooperate with SF, IF, BIO4 and AI institute and ensure that all Project-related informations are accessible, understandable and timely disclosed on both the project and institutional websites as well as other places frequented by potential stakeholders.
- Instruct grant recipients, AI Institute, and BIO4 management on how to engage with stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, NGOs, and other relevant entities, to gather insights and potential concerns and address stakeholder feedback in a timely and effective manner.

² <https://nitra.gov.rs/images/inovacije/saige/2024-06-20/Appraisal%20AF%20SAIGE%20AI%20%20BIO4%20ESMF%20FINAL.pdf>

- Based on the Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)³, facilitate ongoing and meaningful consultations with the Project stakeholders (including public hearings, workshops, and meetings), to address any potential public misperceptions and promote socially responsible scientific research.

3.4 Grievance Mechanism Management

- Ensure that the Project and workers related Grievance Mechanisms are established, communicated to relevant stakeholders, accessible and functional.
- Make sure all project-related grievances are adequately and timely addressed.
- Regularly report on project and workers grievances through the standard reporting format of grievance Log.

3.5. Monitoring and Reporting

- Establish a monitoring framework to track the implementation and effectiveness of social risk mitigation measures.
- Prepare ad hoc reports and papers as the needs of the Project require on social risk management activities and stakeholder engagement including progress, challenges, and recommendations for continuous improvement.
- The Consultants will work under the supervision of the PIU Project Manager to whom he/she directly reports and will provide E&S-related inputs (social aspects) for project management reports, twice-annual progress reports, annual budgets, work plans, and mid-term review documentation.

4. Deliverables

The Social Risk Assessment Specialist is expected to deliver the following:

- A comprehensive Social Risk Assessment Report for the Project financed BIO4 and AI institute activities, including risk identification, analysis, and mitigation strategies;
- Regular reports on the social risk and mitigation and implementation of social risk mitigation measures;
- Records of engagement activities;
- Final report summarizing the overall social risk management efforts, outcomes, and lessons learned.

5. Experience and Qualifications

The ideal candidate should possess the following qualifications and experience:

- University degree (minimum Master) in Social Sciences, Risk Management, or related fields; Five (5) years of direct experience in social risk assessment and management for WB, EBRD, or other IFIs may be substituted for a degree in a relevant field.
- Additional knowledge in AI would be considered as an advantage;
- Experience with the scientific research sector and competitive research funding;
- Proven experience in social risk assessment and management, on internationally funded projects would be considered an advantage;

³ <https://nitra.gov.rs/images/inovacije/saige/2024-06-20/Apprasail%20AF%20SAIGE%20AI%20%20BIO4%20SEP%20FINAL.pdf>

- Proven experience in social risk management in research and innovation projects would be considered an advantage;
- Previous work experience with multidisciplinary teams;
- Demonstrated clear and concise writing/ reporting and presentation skills;
- knowledge of written and spoken Serbian and English;
- computer literacy and use of MS Office tools;
- Experience with relevant local, national, and international regulations and standards related to social risk management.

Selection of consultant

The candidates will be evaluated applying the following evaluation criteria:

- Qualifications and General experience (40 Points)
- Specific Experience relevant to the Assignment (60 Points)

6. Timeframe and Duration

The Consultant will be engaged on a full-time basis. The assignment is expected to last until September 30, 2025.

The Consultant shall not have another full or part-time assignment during the engagement under this Contract.

The Consultant will be based at the Client/PIU office in Belgrade, with possible travel to project sites and stakeholder locations as required.

7. Reporting Obligations

The Consultant will report to the PIU Project Manager and should prepare monthly activity reports (timesheets) in which he/she will summarize key issues and emerging and day-to-day tasks undertaken.

8. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

The Consultants will maintain confidentiality on all information that is not in the public domain and shall not be involved in another assignment that represents a conflict of interest to the prevailing assignment.