

Terms of References

Senior Education Policy Advisor

Polaris Programme: Support to multi-level governance in Ukraine

About SALAR International & its engagement in Ukraine

SALAR International is a subsidiary of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), representing all 290 municipalities and 21 regions in Sweden. As the international branch of SALAR, we work globally to support local democracy and good governance in developing and transitioning countries. Our expertise covers areas such as capacity building in municipal management and service delivery, local and regional development planning, support for local government associations, decentralisation policies and European integration. Geographically, SALAR International's projects cover countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Sub-Saharan Africa.

SALAR International has been engaged in Ukraine since 2014, providing support to Ukraine's decentralisation process through three major initiatives focusing on building a robust multi-level governance system, increasing accessibility and quality of services at the local level, and enhancing international cooperation between municipalities from Ukraine and the EU. After the full-scale invasion, SALAR International has added crisis support to Ukrainian municipalities, providing them with material assistance.

Description of the assignment context

To address the changing needs of Ukrainian municipalities and national level stakeholders during wartime, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has initiated a broader programme in support of multilevel governance and recovery. This programme is called "Polaris: Supporting Multi-level Governance in Ukraine". It is implemented by SALAR International and planned for four years (July 2024-May 2028).

Polaris Programme aims to work with both short and long-term focus, addressing the needs of the multi-level governance system in Ukraine and in parallel strengthening municipalities' public service provision, as well as their direct engagement in the recovery and reconstruction processes, in line with the requirements of Ukraine's EU accession.

The Programme's support is provided through two operational components: one focusing on policy and collaboration with national stakeholders, and the other providing direct support to municipalities. The support encompasses five thematic areas: Education, Fiscal Decentralisation and Budgeting, Administrative Service Provision, Locally-led Recovery, and International Municipal Cooperation. In addition, the Programme will provide material support to meet short-term material crisis needs of municipalities.

Organisational set up

The programme is a joint Swedish-Ukrainian initiative with management structures in both Stockholm and Kyiv. It encourages a flat organisational structure, meaning a high degree of autonomy and responsibility for involved experts, as well as strong local ownership among beneficiaries such as national stakeholders and Ukrainian municipalities.

It is expected that more than 50 people will be working full-time in Ukraine within various thematic

teams as well as support units.

The Programme has its office in Kyiv but the support and activities target local self-government in all regions of Ukraine and will be implemented in all regions controlled by the Ukrainian government. The support is provided on demand, in most cases through open calls.

Role description

Polaris Programme intends to engage a Senior Education Policy Advisor (SEPA) to provide in-depth policy support to the Government of Ukraine, in particular to the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry for Community and Territorial Development, the Ministry of Finance, the Parliament of Ukraine and other relevant programme stakeholders. The role of SEPA will be to ensure that policy advice in the education sector is coherent, timely, evidence-based and effective.

In particular, SEPA will be focusing on main long-term challenges to the education sector in Ukraine, arising from the unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine, which lead to significant budget constraints and jeopardize serious education reforms. These include but are not limited to current reforms such as the New Ukrainian School, introduction of academic profile lyceums, and new law on preschool education, as well as the design and implementation of new policy initiatives, such as reform of teacher salaries or “School Offline” project.

The role of the Senior Expert is also to cooperate with policy experts of Polaris and to strengthen the Education National team in its current and future tasks. The Expert will work in the Education National team and will report to its Leader.

Main responsibilities

- Support to the Government of Ukraine, represented by the relevant central executive body, and, if necessary, upon additional request, the Verkhovna Rada focusing on policy advice on current and planned education reforms such as reform of teacher salaries, “School Offline”, and introduction of academic profile lyceums etc.
- Preparation of policy papers, policy notes, comments on draft laws, regulations, and other type of policy documents designed by national education stakeholders, alone or in collaboration with Polaris programme experts.
- Organization and participation in seminars, working groups, internal or public discussions of policy issues, lying within the areas of direct or indirect activities of education teams of Polaris programme.
- Identification of main overlaps and points of conflict of allocation competencies between tiers of government in the current system, recommendations of adjustments of legal basis, alignment with decentralization of other public sectors.
- Review and monitoring of current and planned education reforms such as (but not limited to) reform of teacher salaries, “School Offline”, preschool education and introduction of academic profile lyceums.
- Identification of common problems, challenges and obstacles in implementation of the new law on preschool education.
- Preparation of proposals for improving the legislative regulation on preschool education.
- Identification and compilation of lessons from experience of EU countries in the field of education management and financing.

- Presentation of findings and recommendations to senior management of partner institutions
- Cooperation with the Education Local Component, the Fiscal Decentralization Component and Executive Policy Group for Polaris, as well as with other projects working in education in Ukraine.

Key competencies required from the Expert:

- Over 20 years of practical experience of management in Ukrainian education system at different governance levels, including school, city, national.
- In-depth understanding of recent and current education reforms in Ukraine.
- Work experience as consultant in development projects in international environment.
- Ability to work autonomously, strong analytical and communication skills.
- Professional proficiency in Ukrainian and intermediate English.

Diversity and equal opportunities

SALAR International embraces diversity and respects human rights in all areas of its work. SALAR International strives to create a gender-equal and diverse working environment. Team members shall respect equal rights of individuals and strive to create an atmosphere where people's differences are accepted and valued. SALAR International supports working arrangements that enable personnel to combine work with family commitments.

Level of effort: 6 days per month

Location: Ukraine

Duration: November (preliminary) – 31.05.2026

Application: Interested and qualified candidates should send their CV, motivation letter, and a sample of relevant project experience, preferably in English, to: ukraine@salarinternational.se. Please indicate in the subject line "Senior Education Policy Advisor".

Deadline: November 10, 2025.

If you have any questions or clarifications, please contact ukraine@salarinternational.se

Personal information provided by the applicant during the selection process will be processed by SALAR International.