

Open Call for Consulting Services

Employment and Social Affairs Platform-ESAP

Reference Number: 033-021

Terms of Reference: An updated review of the performance of Western Balkan economies regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights and Action Plan

Contracting Authority: Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat

Reporting to: RCC Secretariat

Duration: 20 April 2021 – 30 June 2021

Number of Posts: 7 (1 international expert and one expert per economy from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia)

Application Deadline: 15 April 2021

Reference Number: 033-021

Eligible: Respective consulting companies/consortia or individual consultants within bidding consortia

I BACKGROUND

Purpose

The aim of the assignment is to update the existing 2020 reviews of the current situation and trends regarding the performance of the six Western Balkan economies in each of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The updated reviews will include the latest data for the indicators of the Social Scoreboard, and its updates (including for 2020

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

where available) and recent policy developments, actions, legislation and implementation with regard to the realisation of the Pillar principles and Pillar Action Plan.

Background Information

The European Pillar of Social Rights is the major political initiative of the European Commission for building a fair and more social Europe.[†] The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU proclaimed in November 2017 the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Gothenburg Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth. The Pillar lays down 20 principles and rights considered as essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems in 21st century Europe.

The 20 principles are grouped in three areas: (1) *equal opportunities and access to the labour market* with principles and rights on education, training and life-long learning, gender equality, equal opportunities and active support to employment, (2) *fair working conditions* defined by secure and adaptable employment, wages, information about employment conditions and protection in case of dismissals, social dialogue and involvement of workers, work-life balance, healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection, and (3) *social protection and inclusion* covering childcare and support to children, social protection, unemployment benefits, minimum income, old age income and pensions, health care, inclusion of people with disabilities, long-term care, housing and assistance for the homeless, as well as access to essential services. The Pillar builds on the existing EU social law (EU *acquis*). The Pillar also includes principles and rights that are primarily in the responsibility of the Member States.

Statements of EU officials have highlighted that the current COVID-19 crisis requires recovery, resilience building and just, green and digital transitions of economies. The European Pillar of Social Rights is the European Commission's social strategy to make sure that the transitions of climate-neutrality, digitalisation and demographic change, as well as the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, are socially fair and just. In these EU officials' statements, it is stressed that the European Pillar of Social Rights provides a compass to tackle the social and economic challenges of our time. To support the implementation of the Pillar and prepare the ground for the Pillar's Action Plan the European Commission launched a broad discussion with all EU countries and regions and with all its partners and this consultation ended in November, 2020.

On March 4, 2021, the European Commission presented the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan \(Action Plan\)](#) which outlines concrete actions to further implement the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights as a joint effort by the Members States and the EU, with an active involvement of social partners and civil society. The Action Plan proposes [employment, skills and social protection headline targets for the EU to be achieved by 2030](#). This Action Plan is the Commission's contribution to the implementation of the Social Pillar principles. These new targets will be supported by a revision of the Social Scoreboard.

As a key monitoring tool used in the European Semester, the Commission has also proposed to revise the Social Scoreboard to cover the Pillar more extensively. Alongside the

[†] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en

headline targets, integrating and updating the existing set of indicators will contribute to tracking progress towards the Pillar principles in a more comprehensive manner and to monitor the implementation of policy actions proposed by this Action Plan. The proposal for an **update of the Social Scoreboard**, linked also to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, is presented as an Annex 2 in the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan \(Action Plan\)](#) and needs to be considered for this Consultancy.

In February 2018, the European Commission presented its Communication on *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*[‡]. One of the policy priority areas is the support to socio-economic development with a new reinforced social dimension for the Western Balkans. This will include an increased focus on employment and social reforms through greater monitoring of relevant policies, including in the ERPs. In order to bring the programmes closer in line with the European Semester, the monitoring of the social situation and policies will include the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The European Pillar of Social Rights is therefore of very concrete relevance for the Western Balkan economies aspiring EU membership in their reform efforts for advancing the delivery of social rights. The EU enlargement process covers extensively the employment and social inclusion areas which are part of the Pillar, namely through the economic governance and under chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) of the accession negotiations.

Like in the EU, in WB economies, the COVID-19 crisis and related recovery measures have only even more emphasized the importance and relevance of the elements of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Western Balkan's social and economic resilience has been severely pressured as a result of COVID-19 reality. COVID-19 has laid bare existing inequalities in societies. For Western Balkans economies, it will be key to understand their progress in alignment with the European Pillar of Social Rights in term of EU accession process, gaps and priority areas, but also the COVID-19 reality. As part of the Western Balkans economies response to the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are certain components of economy specific Recovery and Resilience Plans that may be related to the implementation of specific principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, thus this assessment will be relevant in terms of the overall accession process but also the COVID-19 response and recovery context.

Finally, in terms of relevance for the WB6, it is important to highlight that in the enlargement countries (WB6), the updated Social Scoreboard will be used in the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) process to monitor progress on the implementation of the Pillar, subject to data availability.

In this context, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) of the European Commission is responsible for assessing the economic governance policy areas of "*employment and labour market*", "*social inclusion, poverty reduction and equal opportunities*", and "*education and skills*". Furthermore, DG EMPL is responsible for monitoring the alignment of candidate countries to the EU acquis in Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment). Some of the Pillar principles are directly related to the *acquis*.

[‡] COM(2018)65 final of 6.2.2018

In 2019, DG EMPL produced a first synthetic overview on the current situation and trends regarding the performance of the Western Balkan economies in each of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The review includes available economy level data for the indicators of the Social Scoreboard and flags the areas where data are not yet available or limited. Furthermore, the review identifies the main gaps in policy making, legislation and implementation with regard to the realisation of the Pillar principles, in order to inform the prioritisation of topics in the economic governance process and the acquis alignment.

In 2020, RCC as part of the ESAP 2 project developed updated Overviews on the Performance of the Western Balkan economies regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights. The following links include the six reports for the Western Balkans economies ([Albania](#), [BiH](#), [Kosovo*](#), [Montenegro](#), [North Macedonia](#), [Serbia](#)) and the [Overview Report for Western Balkan](#). These 2020 reviews have included available economy level data for the indicators of the **Social Scoreboard** and flagged areas where data were not yet available or limited

The 2020 Social Scoreboard for WB, a comprehensive excel file which includes available data for all six economies across the EU Social Scoreboard indices has also been collected and developed in the first half of 2020. This file has not been posted online, and will be delivered to the selected Contractor to be used during this assignment for updating with most recent available data from six economies. The selected Contractor is tasked with updating this file with most recent data (preferably 2020) from WB 6 economies, filling in any data gaps and ensuring data is collected and aligned with 2021 proposed changes to the EU Social Scoreboard.

II DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and Scope of the Assignment

The aim of the assignment is to update the 6 existing 2020 reviews of the current situation and trends regarding the performance of the Western Balkan economies in each of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and also taking into the 2021 Action Plan. The updated reviews will include the latest data for the indicators of the Social Scoreboard (including for 2020 where available), the proposed updates to the Social Score Board (in the 2021 Action Plan) and all recent policy developments, actions, legislation and implementation with regard to the realisation of the Pillar principle, as well as Covid-19 context in terms of its relation to the Pillar principles.

The structure of the 6 updated economy reviews should be as follows:

I. Executive summary (1.5 pages) – update the overall performance of the reviewed economy, the performance in each of the three chapters of the Pillar and Action Plan and the areas with particularly strong challenges for the economy.

II. Introduction (1.5 pages) – provide an updated introduction to and contextualisation of the review for each economy.

III. The economy’s performance in the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (Pillar) and Action Plan (max. 30 pages) – provide an updated assessment of where each economy stands with regard to the realisation, in law and in practice, of the rights and standards enshrined in the principle. It must include the latest available data (preferably 2020), in particular focusing on the (headline) indicators included in the social scoreboard, also taking account the 2021 EU revised Social Scoreboard. It must also contain up-to-date information where there is any major policy initiative or change on the economy’s agenda affecting the Principle, particular attention and reference also needs to be given to any measures and policies related to Covid-19 response and recovery, their timeframes (temporary or not) and relation to the Pillar and Action Plan.

IV. Conclusion (1 page) – updated summary assessment of the main strengths and weaknesses/gaps of the economy’s performance and a proposal for policy prioritisation in the short-to- medium term, also taking into account Covid-19 recovery plans.

Annex -Updated Social Scoreboard for each economy based on the updated EU Social Scoreboard, with most recent data (2020 as available).

The structure of the updated 2021 Overview Report for Western Balkan should follow the structure as in the [2020 Overview Report for Western Balkan](#), and not be longer than 30 pages. The Overview Report for Western Balkans is a comparative report and needs to draw on the six reports per economy, analyse each Pillar principle across the 6 economies and, in comparison with EU 27.

Methodology

The experts are expected to come up with the best approaches for undertaking this task. However, the following guiding principles should be taken into consideration:

- i. Desk review of primary and secondary information;
- ii. Interviews with relevant officials;
- iii. Any other methods applicable.

Lines of Communication

- The experts will report to the RCC.
- The experts will work closely with the officials of relevant public administration institutions in each economy and the RCC ESAP 2 project team from whom they will seek guidelines to efficiently conduct the work.

Timeframe

The engagement is expected to start on 20 April 2021.

Deliverables	Due date
Methodology, approach & technical work-plan with detailed timelines and interim deliverables, addressing all RCC feedback	27 April 2021, draft 3 May 2021, final, accepted by RCC
6 <u>draft</u> updated economy level reviews of the	8 June 2021

performance of Western Balkan economies regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights, with annex Social Scoreboard with most recent data	
6 <u>finalized</u> updated economy level reviews of the performance of Western Balkan economies regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights, with annex Social Scoreboard with most recent data, taking into account all comments after reviews.	30 June 2021
<u>Draft</u> Updated 2021 Overview Report for Western Balkan.	8 June 2021
<u>Finalized</u> Updated 2021 Overview Report for Western Balkan, taking into account all comments after reviews	
Updated Social Scoreboard for WB 6 based on the updated EU Social Scoreboard, with most recent data (2020 as available)	30 June 2021

III PROFILE AND COMPETENCIES OF THE EXPERTS

The experts should have thorough understanding of labour markets and social policies in the respective Western Balkan economies and a good knowledge of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In addition, experts should be well versed and experienced in labour market and social data collection and analysis and drafting high quality reports.

Criteria related to the experts delivering the service:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Post-graduate degree in economics, statistics, social sciences or related field
Experience:	<p>Qualifications and skills required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 15 years of relevant experience in the fields of labour market and social policies ▪ Good knowledge of labour markets and labour policies in the Western Balkan economies ▪ Excellent communication and report writing skills ▪ Analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly ▪ Able to interact with professionals of and representatives from the public administrations in the SEE region
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in English, as the official language of the RCC ▪ Knowledge of other languages of the region desirable

Core Values

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling RCC values and ethical standards;

- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.

Core Competencies

- Demonstrates professional competence to meet responsibilities and post requirements and is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results;
- Result-oriented: Plans and produces quality results to meet the set goals, generates innovative and practical solutions to challenging situations;
- Communication: Excellent communication skills, including the ability to convey complex concepts and recommendations clearly;
- Team work: Ability to interact, establish and maintain effective working relations in a culturally diverse team;
- Ability to establish and maintain productive partnerships with regional and national partners and stakeholders.

IV QUALITY CONTROL

The consultant should ensure an internal quality control during the implementing and reporting phase of the assignment. The quality control should ensure that the draft reports comply with the above requirements and meet adequate quality standards before sending them to stakeholders for comments. The quality control should ensure consistency and coherence between findings, conclusions and recommendations. It should also ensure that findings reported are duly substantiated and that conclusions are supported by relevant judgment criteria.

The views expressed in the report will be those of the contractor and will not necessarily reflect those of the Regional Cooperation Council. Therefore, a standard disclaimer reflecting this will be included in the report. In this regard, the expert may or may not accept comments and/or proposals for changes received during the above consultation process. However, when comments/proposals for changes are not agreed by the expert, he/she should clearly explain the reasons for his/her final decision in a comments table.

Quality Control by the Regional Cooperation Council

The consultant outputs shall undergo external reviews by relevant stakeholders, including the representatives of the ESAP project team and the Regional Cooperation Council.

V. APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer

For companies and consortia of individual consultants:

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company. In case of a bidding consortium, the team leader should submit the profile of the consortium;
- Copy of Company's Registration Certificate (in case of consulting companies);
- In case of bidding consortia of individual consultants participating in this Call, they must indicate the members and show how the work is divided between them. Specifically, all members must name the team leader and authorise this member to represent the consortium and receive payments on behalf of the other members. A corresponding written authorisation, power of attorney must be attached to the bid;
- Financial records - company's balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement for the past 2 years (only in case of a bidding of consulting companies);
- CV of an expert(s), outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of References, along with contact details of referees;
- Concept note describing the main issues, information, data sources, research and analytical tools to be employed by the author, as well as the timeline and financial offer;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Application Submission Form (Annex I);
- Signed Statements of Exclusivity and Availability (Annex II).

Financial Offer (Free format)

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;
- VAT amount, if applicable, should be presented.

When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account the following:

- Use a free format for the Budget providing the lump sum for the services to be provided.

NOTE:

When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account the following:

- The expert fees should be consistent with those applicable in the region.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 15 April 2021, by 17:00 Central European Time to the following address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int

- Please make sure that the application is submitted in two separate folders one containing Technical Offer and the other Financial Offer. The documents should be submitted in a form of copies of the originals.

VI. EVALUATION RULES:

- The consultancy will be awarded to the highest qualified bidder based on the relevance of skills and expertise to this assignment;
- The applications are evaluated following these criteria:

EVALUATION GRID	Maximum score
A. Technical Offer (A.1+A.2+A.3)	100
A.1. Work experience, references list: Relevant work experience; evidence of other contracts of the size comparable with that of the tender; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	35
A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultant(s): CV(s) satisfy the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference, education and experience, demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the concept note: Concept note describing the main issues, information, data sources, research and analytical tools to be employed by the author, as well as the timeline.	30
B. Financial Offer/ lowest price has maximum score	100

Score for offer X =

A: [Total quality score (out of 100) of offer X / 100] * 80

B: [Lowest price / price of offer X] * 20

In addition to the results of the technical and financial evaluation, competency-based interview will be held with the selected bidder.

Information on selection of the most favourable bidder

The RCC Secretariat shall inform candidates and bidders of decisions reached concerning the award of the contract as soon as possible, including the grounds for any decision not to award a contract for which there has been competitive tendering or to recommence the procedure.

Standard letter of thanks for participation to unsuccessful bidders shall be sent within 15 days after the contract is signed with the awarded bidder.

The candidates and bidders wishing to receive a feedback may send a request within 15 days after receipt of the standard letter of thanks.

The request may be sent to the e-mail address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int or to the address of the RCC Secretariat:

Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat
Attention to: Administration Department
Building of the Friendship between Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina
Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1/V
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Appeals procedure

Bidders believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may petition the RCC Secretariat directly. The RCC Secretariat must reply within 15 days of receipt of the complaint.

The appeal request may be sent to the e-mail address ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int or to the address of the RCC Secretariat:

Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat
Attention to: Administration Department
Building of the Friendship between Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina
Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1/V
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina

ANNEX I:**APPLICATION SUBMISSION FORM****REF: 033-021 Open Call for Consultancy Services**

Subject: An updated review of the performance of Western Balkan economies regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights

One signed copy of this Application Submission Form must be supplied.

1 SUBMITTED by:

	Name(s) and address(es) of the bidder submitting this tender
Full Company Name or Name of the legal entity/consortia of individual consultants	

2 CONTACT PERSON (for this Call)

Name	
Surname	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
e-mail	

3 **DECLARATION**

[Company Name or Name of the Consortia of Individual Consultants] _____ hereby declares that we have examined and accepted without reserve or restriction the entire contents of the Open Call for Consultancy 032-021.

And we are not in one of the following situations:

- (a) Bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- (b) Have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata;

- (c) Have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the Contracting Authority can justify;
- (d) Have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the Contracting Authority or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- (e) Have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity.
- (f) Are civil servants or other agents of the public administration of the RCC Participants, regardless of the administrative situation, excluding us from being recruited as experts in contracts financed by the RCC Secretariat.

We offer to provide the services requested in the open call for consultancy on the basis of supplied documentation subject of this call, which comprise our technical offer and our financial offer.

Name and Surname	
Signature	
Date	

ANNEX II: STATEMENT OF EXCLUSIVITY AND AVAILABILITY

REF: 033-021

By representing the Entity _____ we agree to participate exclusively in the above-mentioned tender procedure. We further declare that we are able and willing to work for the period(s) foreseen for the position for which our CVs have been included in the event that this tender is successful, namely:

Full Name	Available from (Date)	Available until (Date)	Acceptance by signature	Number of man-days associated to each task from the ToR