

## Open Call for Consulting Services

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Mapping of digital innovation hubs, and identification of needs within Western Balkans (WB) and of prospective regional cooperation actions</b>
<b>RCC Department:</b>	Programme Department
<b>Starting Date:</b>	1 October 2020
<b>Reporting to:</b>	RCC Secretariat
<b>Duration:</b>	01 October – 25 December 2020
<b>Deadline for Application:</b>	25 September 2020
<b>Eligible:</b>	Respective consulting companies or individual consultants within bidding consortia
<b>Number of Consultants:</b>	Key expert plus two consultants (1 + 2)
<b>Reference Number:</b>	078-020

### TERMS OF REFERENCE:

#### I. PURPOSE

The European Commission launched the Digitising European Industry (DEI) initiative in April 2016. The first initiative as part of the Digital Single Market strategy, the DEI initiative, aims to reinforce the EU's competitiveness in digital technologies. Complementing the various national initiatives for Digitising industry, Smart Industry and l'industrie du futur, the DEI actions were defined along five main pillars: (i) European platform of national initiatives on digitising industry; (ii) digital innovations for all: Digital Innovation Hubs (DIH); (iii) strengthening leadership through partnerships and industrial platforms; (iv) a regulatory framework fit for the digital age; and (v) preparing Europeans for the digital future.

“DIH is a coordinated group of organisations with complementary expertise and a not-for-profit objective, offering a set of services to companies and public sector organisations, to support their digital transformation”\*. DIHs can help SMEs from EU and WB region in their digital transformation, as well as improve business processes for better use of digital

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\* <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/webinars-digital-innovation-hubs-serving-public-sector>

technologies, to ensure that every company, regardless of its development, can take advantage of digital opportunities and become more competitive.

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support the Western Balkans in mapping digital innovation hubs, paying due attention to the most current developments in each WB economy in this area.

The consultancy aims to provide expert advice on identifying needs of WB economies to further develop DIHs, define a model/steps to be chosen in each WB economy that supports promotion of DIHs, and provide expert advice on concrete actions and activities, be it national or regional while factoring specific needs, to support networking, promote innovative solutions and engage DIHs in concrete work of EU DIHs network.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

At the Trieste Summit of the Berlin Process (12th July 2017) Western Balkan leaders endorsed the Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA), prepared and coordinated by RCC. The MAP REA puts forward a structured agenda for regional economic integration promoting further trade integration, introducing a dynamic regional investment space, facilitating regional mobility, and creating a digital integration agenda. It stems from the commitments undertaken within the framework of the Central European Free Trade Agreement and South East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy and is based on EU rules and principles as reflected in the Stabilisation and Association Agreements.

The MAP REA agenda was introduced with an objective to spur economic growth and foster regional cooperation among Western Balkan economies. Activities that are foreseen within MAP REA have the potential to improve the attractiveness of the region, create value chains across borders, boost intraregional trade and produce employment opportunities to tackle brain drain.

Digital Integration is one of the components of MAP REA and measures therein aim to integrate the region into the pan-European digital market on the basis of a future-proof digitisation strategy, an updated regulatory environment, improved broadband infrastructure and access as well as accelerate digitisation in the region. Digital transformation is a foundational change in the process of using digital technologies to create new experiences, opportunities, processes in changing business and market requirements. Recognising the true meaning of the digital transformation, its process and the need for its implementation is a basic precondition for the integration of digital technologies in all areas. Embracing digital transformation, ensuring greater availability of digital infrastructure, and enabling better regulatory framework and level playing field can help our region grow, increase the convergence rates with the EU, improve the business environment and encourage cross-border services, thus offering better life for the citizens.

In addition, Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans launched on 25-26 June 2018 aims to support the digital transformation, improve service delivery for the citizens and businesses and help Western Balkans in the preparations to integrate better into the EU Digital Single Market.

Digitalisation of industry is utmost priority for Western Balkans while strengthening skills and capacities at all levels represents the key priority for economic transformation and making the best use of digital era. Efforts to embrace technological change and be able to benefit from digital tools are yet to be made as well as investing in the capacity building of DIHs in the Western Balkans and supporting their collaboration with DIHs across EU. Several DIHs have been identified in the WB region, whose cooperation should be more developed. The EU established an European network of Digital Innovation Hubs with the aim to help companies improve their processes, products and services through the use of digital technologies. WB economies are not part of the network and they need to join EU DIHs network in order for each of them to explore the full potential of new industrial revolution and develop capacities to cope with new technologies and challenges of digital era. Nevertheless, all DIHs identified in the WB region can be found on the EU platform for smart specialisation, with their status defined as fully operational/ in preparation/ potential DIH from Horizon 2020. Covid-19 has shown that the use of new technologies and DIH solutions can improve our daily lives.

## **II DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Objectives and scope of the assignment**

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support the Western Balkan region to achieve greater alignment with the EU in the area of innovation and start-up ecosystem support. Due consideration should be particularly given to the European Commission's Initiative for Digitising European Industry, developments in regard to Digital innovations for all: Digital Innovation Hubs, new practices and approaches related to ways to improve processes, products and services through digital technologies in the EU, and also support to find investments. DIHs operate according to different business models and a targeted funding mix plus a matrix of different funding instruments for the digital transformation of SMEs are required for their sustainability.

In the process of digitisation, Western Balkan economies are still lagging behind the European Union, but the gap is narrowing year by year. In addition to development of a regulatory and legal framework similar to the EU's, Western Balkan economies are committed to providing strong incentive programmes for digital transformation process and developing innovative potential in the region.

For this purpose, a consortium of experts (1 +2) will be engaged to create a basis for regional actions for further development of digital innovation hubs in the Western Balkan region. This assignment targets all Western Balkan economies.

The scope of services under this assignment includes the following:

1. Map all types of digital innovation hubs in Western Balkan economies;
2. Provide expert support to identify the needs of digital innovation hubs in WB economies, and define regional approach for cooperation among DIHs, introducing best practices from the EU;

3. Provide expert advice on concrete regional actions and activities related to digital innovation hubs, in particular to support development of digital innovation hubs in Western Balkans at all levels.

### **Specific Tasks**

The specific tasks specified herewith are:

1. Map all types of digital innovation hubs, including the concrete technology they focus on, in Western Balkan economies in order to identify the needs for developing DIHs in the Western Balkans;
2. For each DIH identified, assess the scope of activities, areas covered, modes of work, products/services offered, capacity building needs, etc.;
3. Provide a set of DIH good practices, in particular from eastern European EU MS, initiated under national and regional policy initiative(s), analyse those initiatives, including national structures/institutions governing digital innovation hubs in each WB economy (including their responsibilities, competencies and roles);
4. Identify possible barriers to development of digital innovation hubs in the WB region;
5. Provide expert advice on specific funding instruments which can be used to develop DIHs in the WB region (regional funding instruments, Horizon 2020, etc.);
6. Propose the concept of the first networking meeting among WB DIHs, identify the relevant peers from EU MS that may join the first meeting;
7. Provide expert advice and any other support, including specific target groups for which DIHs can be established or existing ones expanded, based on the specific agenda related to digitalisation of industry.

### **Deliverables**

- Methodology and work plan;
- The first draft report, incorporating a separate chapter for each WB economy with all data defined in these Terms of Reference;
- Report incorporating all relevant comments provided by Western Balkan economies and the RCC Secretariat covering all aspects defined in these Terms of Reference.

### **Methodology**

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

1. Desk review of related documents/reports on digital innovation hubs in the EU and in the Western Balkans, and of defining DIH approaches in each WB economy;
2. Desk review of all existing reports and/or assessments relevant to the key tasks covered by these Terms of Reference;
3. Communication/interviews/consultations/focus groups with the representatives of national administrations in the respective areas;
4. Any other method applicable.

To achieve the objectives of these Terms of Reference, the expert may also establish direct communication with MAP REA Digital CCPs to discuss and exchange views on the scope of

investigation and analysis in each economy. The RCC will provide all contacts mentioned in these ToR as needed.

### **Lines of Communication**

- The expert will report to the RCC Secretariat. Upon completion of activities as defined in the timeframe and in accordance with Terms of Reference, a detailed report will be prepared and sent to the RCC Secretariat for review and approval.
- If needed a meeting with RCC experts may be organised to elaborate further on expectations and deliverables.

### **Timeframe**

The engagement is expected to start on 1 October 2020 and end on 25 December 2020. Consortium of experts (with one acting as key expert) will carry out the tasks defined in these ToR. The level of effort required is 60 days: 10 days per each economy.

The organisation of work among the experts so as to cover all Western Balkan region will be agreed and managed by the consortium of experts and included in the methodology and work plan.

<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Due date</b>
Methodology and work plan	7 October
First draft report for each WB economy with all data defined in these Terms of Reference. The draft should contain comments and suggestions from each WB economy, collected during the meetings and research.  Note: The draft report shall be also shared with the Western Balkan economies for review	20 November
Final report incorporating all relevant comments provided by Western Balkan economies and the RCC Secretariat covering all aspects defined in these Terms of Reference	25 December 2020

## **III COMPETENCIES**

### **Expert Qualifications:**

#### **Criteria related to the experts delivering the service**

<b>Education:</b>	Advanced degree in engineering, law, economics, business, or other areas directly related to the subject of work Master's Degree or PhD is an advantage.
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<b>Experience:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in similar consultancies;</li> <li>▪ Experience in working with governments and/or EU institutions on developing strategic documents and programmes related to digital innovation hubs and start-up ecosystem is considered an advantage;</li> <li>▪ Good knowledge of the EU platforms and familiarity with European platform of national initiatives on digitising industry and European Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027;</li> <li>▪ Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly;</li> <li>▪ In-depth knowledge of the economies covered by the assignment;</li> <li>▪ Demonstrable experience in writing and reporting on complex multi-sector or multi-country strategy development and implementation (samples of work to be provided);</li> <li>▪ Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, businesses, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders;</li> </ul>
<b>Language requirements:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fluency in written and spoken English, as the official language of the RCC;</li> <li>▪ Knowledge of other RCC languages is desirable.</li> </ul>
<b>Other:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ N.A.</li> </ul>

### **Core Values**

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling RCC values and ethical standards;
- He/she is independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities defined by the Terms of Reference;
- 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 expert should ensure an internal quality control during the implementing and reporting phase of the assignment. The quality control should ensure that the draft reports and deliverables 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 reports. 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.

#### **V APPLICATION RULES**

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

##### **Technical Offer**

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company. In case of a bidding consortium, the key expert/team leader should submit the profile of the consortium stating the key expert and experts;
- Copy of Company's Registration Certificate (in case of consulting companies). In case of a bidding consortium a corresponding written authorisation, power of attorney is accordingly treated;
- 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(s) of key expert/team leader and consultants/experts outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in Competencies section of the Terms of References.

- Proposed Work Plan Methodological Note/ for the implementation of the assignment, including timeframe;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past 7 years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Application Submission Form (Annex I);
- Statement of Availability (Annex II).

**Financial Offer** (Free format)

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;
- Use a free format for the Budget providing the Global Price for the work to be provided.

Note:

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

- The fee rates should be broadly consistent with those applicable in the region.

**Submission of applications:**

**Applications need to be submitted by 25 September by 15:00 Central European Time to the following address [ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int](mailto: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

<b>A.1. Work experience, references list:</b> 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
<b>A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultant(s):</b> CV(s) satisfy the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference, education and experiences demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
<b>A.3 Quality of the proposed Work Plan:</b> An outline of work plan/methodological 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>B. Financial Offer/ lowest price has maximum score</b>	<b>100</b>

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](mailto: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](mailto: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: 078-020      Open Call for Consultancy Services****Subject:      Mapping of digital innovation hubs, and identification of needs within Western Balkans (WB) and of prospective regional cooperation actions****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 Entity Name	

2      CONTACT PERSON (for this Call)

Name	
Surname	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
e-mail	

3      **DECLARATION**

[Company Name or Name of the Entity] \_\_\_\_\_ hereby declares that we have examined and accepted without reserve or restriction the entire contents of the Open Call for Consultancy.

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 AVAILABILITY**

**REF: 078-020**

By representing the Entity\_\_\_\_\_ we agree to participate 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