

Open Call for Consulting Services

Title:	Study on the Economic Benefits of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in the Western Balkans six (WB6)
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Eligible:	Individual experts, consulting companies, bidding consortia of individual experts
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	2 November 2020 – 28 December 2020
Deadline for Application:	28 October 2020
Reference number:	093-020

Terms of Reference:

IV. BACKGROUND

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was established in 2008 as a regionally owned and led framework. It works under the political guidance of the SEECP to promote regional cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe (SEE). The areas of cooperation in the framework of the RCC are Economic and Social Development, with a particular focus on Economic Competitiveness, Human Capital Development, Digital Integration and Sustainable Growth and Climate Change Resilience; Political Cooperation, Good Governance and Security, as well as gender mainstreaming.

Drawing on the Strategy and Work Programme (SWP) 2020-2022, RCC seeks to increase its focus on empowering women, including in the labour market as a key element of human capital development. This will be accomplished particularly by supporting increased participation of women in business and labour markets of the WB economies in line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which calls for a gender-equal society. Being a core value of the EU, the fundamental right and key principle of European Pillar of Social Rights, gender equality is considered not only to be an essential condition for an innovative, competitive and thriving European economy but also part of the accession conditions with which Western Balkan economies have to comply. One of the key objectives flagged in the Gender Equality Strategy is equal participation across different sectors of the economy and addressing the gender pay and pension gaps and closing gender gaps in the labour market.

The Gender Equality Index 2019 of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) shows that the EU's score on gender equality is 67.4, moving at a very slow pace, just up one point

compared to the 2017 Index^{*}. EIGE provides evidence that improving gender equality brings a positive impact to a society in terms of GDP growth, employment, productivity, as well as spillover effects from one domain to another. Indeed, it is estimated that the GDP increase due to gender equality in the EU Member States varies from around 4% to an exceeding 10%[†]. According to the Women in Work Index 2020, enhancing female participation in work in the OECD countries could boost the OECD GDP by \$ 6 trillion[‡].

Across the globe, women earn less, hold less secure jobs, and are more likely to be employed in the informal sector. The outbreak of COVID-19 caused deepening of the pre-existing inequalities between women and men; not only are women overrepresented in fighting the pandemic but are also suffering from the socio-economic fallout. According to ILO, COVID-19 pandemic causes a higher risk to women in the labour market. The gender inequalities are only exacerbated by the spread of the coronavirus, thus highlighting the precarious position women found themselves in the aftermath of the pandemic. When devising national plans to combat negative consequences of the virus outbreak, women's leadership and contributions must be placed at the core of sustainable and resilient economic recovery programmes as gender equality contributes to economic growth.

Empowering women is a key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but it is also among key priorities of the EU External Action. The EU promotes gender equality and women empowerment throughout the world through its cooperation programmes, international partnerships and dialogue. This includes the WB6 economies, which during their Stabilisation and Association Processes and accession negotiations are expected to mainstream gender in policy making. However, gender inequalities persist in several areas in the WB6 region.

The EU Gender Action Plan II (GAP II) provides the framework for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the EU's external relations. The progress is monitored every year through implementation reports which speak of challenges in the implementation of GAP II commitments towards gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. As part of the enlargement process, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) supports the monitoring process in the external dimension, leading to a better monitoring of several policy areas in EU candidate and potential candidates. The Western Balkan economies are committed to mainstream gender across their sector policies.

In light of this, RCC aims to provide an in-depth overview of the existing gender equality and women empowerment policy frameworks, programmes and initiatives at national and regional level and measure the economic benefits of gender equality in the WB6. RCC in consultation with the Western Balkan economies is working on an enhanced and upgraded REA 2021-2024 Roadmap, incorporating pragmatic, impact- and target-oriented measures, including fostering women entrepreneurship and supporting increased participation of women in STEM fields. This would serve to increase awareness on the importance of gender equality and inspire relevant policies and actions. In order to enhance impact, through its regional

* <https://eige.europa.eu/news/gender-equality-index-2019-still-far-finish-line>

† European Institute for Gender Equality, Economic Benefits of Gender Equality in the European Union

‡ PwC, Women in Work Index 2020

structures, RCC will coordinate with relevant government institutions, private sector stakeholders, academia, and partner organisations, ensuring their commitment to this agenda.

V. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and scope of the assignment

The purpose of this consultancy is to support the RCC Secretariat in implementing actions concerning Gender Equality and Women Economic Empowerment as part of RCC strategic documents and action plans in the WB6 (namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

This consultancy will support the RCC Secretariat in conducting an analysis of the economic benefits of gender equality in the Western Balkans and at the level of each Western Balkan economy, with the purpose of demonstrating the impact of reducing gender inequalities in the economic activities, specifically related to GDP and employment (i.e. participation rates, labour supply, wages and unpaid work). The aim of this consultancy is to provide substantiated data in a form of a study which help measure the economic impact of gender policies and initiatives related to economic growth in the WB6 region, both directly and indirectly, identify gaps and propose further measures necessary to achieve a significant impact on economic growth.

Specific Tasks

The scope of services under this assignment includes the following:

- Familiarise oneself with the RCC SWP 2020-2022 and other RCC strategic documents; study thoroughly EIGE study on the Economic Benefits of Gender Equality in the European Union, including the report on the empirical application of the model for analysis[§] to serve as a guidance for the analysis;
- Collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data** per Western Balkan economy that indicate:
 - potential gender impacts on the economies (in relation to GDP) through labour market indicators (labour market participation rate, gender pay gap, employment, working hours, etc.); the reasons for contribution of these indicators to the gender gap;

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

[§] The study can be accessed on the following link: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality>

** Under its ESAP Project, RCC already collects some gender disaggregated data on employment (general indicators, such as participation and employment rates). RCC will share the data with the experts upon the initiation of the consultancy.

- the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on women in the labour market in the WB6 economies;
- Prepare a research report including:
 - Analysis and interpretations of the statistical data on women’s participation in the labour market in each WB economy and at the regional level, in the narrative form and through graphs and figures, i.e. offering a visual representation of the findings;
 - Assessment of the collected data/information and its impact on economic growth; a comprehensive (quantitative and qualitative) analysis of the gender equality benefits on economic growth of WB6 economies at the regional level;
- Provide policy recommendations and proposals for support actions at a regional level aiming to:
 - Improve gender policies and enhance women empowerment in the WB region;
 - Identify opportunities and assess the potential gains from further gender mainstreaming into national employment policies and empowering women;
- Develop a Women Empowerment Index for the WB6 that can measure regional trends on a regular basis.

In all its stages, the deliverables will be developed in close consultation with the RCC Secretariat.

In the first stage when a detailed outline and methodology of work are to be developed, a preparatory online meeting will be held with the RCC Secretariat.

Deliverables

The following deliverables will be produced and transferred to the RCC Secretariat during the course of the assignment in the following timeline:

Deliverables	Expected Level of Efforts (in days)	Deadline
Methodology and work plan	2	5 November
First draft of the Report, incorporating sex disaggregated data in the labour market for each Western Balkan economy and at the level of Western Balkan region, and providing the first analysis of the impacts to economic growth	15	7 December
Final Report, including the final analysis, recommendations and conclusions related to the economic benefits of gender equality and women empowerment at the level of the Western Balkans; and	13	28 December

incorporating all relevant comments provided by RCC Secretariat		
---	--	--

Methodology

The consultancy is expected to propose the best methodological approach for undertaking this task.

However, the following guiding principles should be taken into consideration:

- i. Desk review of primary and secondary data/sources;
- ii. Communication/interviews/consultations with the representatives of the Western Balkans Six economies (national coordination mechanisms at government level, including Gender Focal Points, if available; private sector; academia; CSOs, etc.) and relevant regional and international organisations;
- iii. Any other methods applicable.

Lines of Communication

The consultants will report to the RCC Secretariat. Each deliverable will be sent to the RCC Secretariat within the set deadlines. RCC Secretariat will conduct a quality assessment and approval of each deliverable.

Timeframe

The assignment is expected to start on 2 November 2020 and end on 28 December 2020.

The consultants are expected to use up to 30 expert days for the completion of this assignment.

VI. COMPETENCES

Qualifications for consultants:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master's Degree in social sciences, economics, business, or other areas directly related to the subject of work, preferably with a specialisation in gender.
-------------------	--

Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in policy advice, research, analysis and/or project implementation in the area of gender equality, inclusive growth, SMEs and Women Entrepreneurship, employment, socio-economic policies or other related policies; ▪ Proven professional record in working with international and/or regional organisations; ▪ Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly, evidenced by a list of published reports/articles in English; ▪ Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, international organisations’ representatives, businesses, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in written and spoken English, as the official language of the RCC; ▪ Knowledge of other RCC languages is an advantage.

Qualifications for Key Expert:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PhD or Master’s Degree in social sciences, economics, business, or other areas directly related to the subject of work, preferably with a specialisation in gender.
Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in policy advice, research, analysis and/or project implementation in the area of inclusive growth, economic development, gender mainstreaming, socio-economic policies or other related policies; ▪ Experience working with statistical/econometric modelling programmes; ▪ Experience in working with government institutions on developing strategic frameworks, strategies, programmes, and dedicated gender policies, in particular; ▪ Proven professional record in working with international and/or regional organisations; ▪ Experience in a civil society organisation or women organisations will be considered an asset; ▪ Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly, evidenced by a list of published reports/articles in English; ▪ Proven communication and presentation skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple actors including government representatives, international

	organisations’ representatives, businesses, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in written and spoken English, as the official language of the RCC; ▪ Knowledge of other RCC languages is an advantage.

Core Values

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

VII. QUALITY CONTROL

The expert should ensure 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 expert 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 consultants' outputs in the form of a report shall be reviewed by the Regional Cooperation Council. The approved final report will be subject to a quality assessment by Programme Department of the Regional Cooperation Council, upon whose endorsement the reports and deliverables will be distributed and made public.

VIII. APPLICATION RULES

Technical Offer:

The technical offer needs to contain the following:

For individual consultants:

- Letter of interest;
- CV, outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in Section III Competencies of the Terms of References;
- List of reports, papers, and other documents the expert has drafted;
- Brief concept note describing the main issues, information, data sources, and tools to be employed by the expert as well as the approach to the work to be undertaken;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past 5 years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Submission Form (Annex I).

For the companies and consortia of individual consultants

- Company/institution profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) about the company. In case of a bidding consortium, the team leader should submit the profile of the consortium;
- Copy of Company's/Institution's Registration Certificate. In case of a bidding consortium, a corresponding written authorisation, power of attorney is accordingly treated;
- Financial records - company's/institution's balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement for the past 2 years (only in case of a bidding of consulting companies);
- CVs of key members of the project team, outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference, along with contact details of referees;

- A concept note of up to 2 pages, elaborating the proposed methodology for addressing and undertaking individual tasks; an additional page can be included, where relevant, indicating key stakeholders to be included in the proposed approach;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past 5 years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Application Submission Form (Annex I);
- Signed Statements of Availability (Annex III).

Financial offer:

Financial offer (Annex II)

Note:

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

Applications including technical and financial offer need to be submitted via e-mail to ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int by 28 October 2020.

IX. EVALUATION AND SELECTION

The assignments will be awarded to the highest qualified applicant based on the skills, expertise, and the quality of the concept note(s) and the cost-effectiveness of the financial offer.

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the profile and competencies of the candidate and the responsiveness to the Terms of Reference for Consulting Services.

The best value for money is established by weighing technical quality against price on an 80/20 basis.

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 nature comparable to that of the Call; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	35
A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultants: CVs satisfy the criteria set forth in the ToR, education and experience demonstrates professional capacity and experience required.	35

A.3 Quality of the concept note and Action Plan: Relevance and applicability within the WB6 regional framework; methodologically sound concept/ plan, achievable within the defined time frame	30
B. Financial Proposal/ 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

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

Open Call for Consultancy Services: 093-020

REF:

One signed copy of this Call for Consultancy Submission Form must be supplied.

1 SUBMITTED by:

Name	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
e-mail	

2. STATEMENT

[Name of the Authorised person representing the Entity] _____ hereby declares that we have examined and accepted without reserve or restriction the entire contents of the Open Call for Experts, Grounds for Exclusions and Conflict of Interest as such:

Grounds for exclusion

Candidates or bidders will be excluded from participation in a procurement procedure if it is known that:

- (a) They are 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) They have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata;
- (c) They have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the Contracting Officer can justify;

- (d) They 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 Officer or those of the country where the contract is to be performed;
- (e) They 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.

Contracts may not be awarded to candidates or bidders who, during the procurement procedure, are:

- (a) Subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) Guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Contracting Officer as a condition of participation in the contract procedure or fail to supply this information.

Conflict of Interest

- a) The Contractor shall take all necessary measures to prevent or end any situation that could compromise the impartial and objective performance of the contract. Such conflict of interests could arise in particular as a result of economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties, or any other relevant connection or shared interest. Any conflict of interests which could arise during performance of the contract must be notified in writing to the Contracting Authority without delay.
- b) The Contracting Authority reserves the right to verify that such measures are adequate and may require additional measures to be taken if necessary. The Consultant shall ensure that their staffs, including its management, are not placed in a situation which could give rise to conflict of interests. The Consultant shall replace, immediately and without compensation from the Contracting Authority, any member of its staff exposed to such a situation.
- c) The Contractor shall refrain from any contact which would compromise its independence or that of its personnel. If the Contractor fails to maintain such independence, the Contracting Authority may, without prejudice to compensation for any damage which it may have suffered on this account, terminate the contract forthwith.
- d) The Contractor shall, after the conclusion or termination of the contract, limit its role in connection with the project to the provision of the services. Except with the written permission of the Contracting Authority, the Contractor and any other contractor or supplier with whom the Contractor is associated or affiliated shall be disqualified from the execution of works, supplies or other services for the project in any capacity, including tendering for any part of the project.

- e) Civil servants and other agents of the public administration of the RCC Participants, regardless of their administrative situation, shall not be recruited as experts in contracts financed by the RCC Secretariat.
- f) The Contractor and anyone working under its authority or control in the performance of the contract or on any other activity shall be excluded from access to RCC Secretariat financing available under the same project unless they can prove to the Contracting Authority that the involvement in previous stages of the project does not constitute unfair competition.

We offer to provide the services requested in the Terms of Reference on the basis of supplied documentation subject to this Open Call for Consultancy Services, which comprise our technical offer, and our financial offer.

This Open Call for Consultancy Services is subject to acceptance within the validity period stipulated in the Terms of Reference.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

ANNEX II: Financial Offer

REF: 093-020

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

NOTE:

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

- Price ceiling: up to EUR 20,000. Bids indicating a price above this threshold shall not be considered.
- The expert fees should be consistent with those applicable in the region.

ANNEX III: STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY

REF: 093-020

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