

## **Open Call for Consulting Services**

<b>Subject:</b>	Support the Regional Cooperation Council to prepare the concept for Western Balkans Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition
<b>Title:</b>	Technical assistance to the Regional Cooperation Council to prepare the concept for Western Balkans Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition
<b>RCC Department:</b>	Programme Department
<b>Reporting to:</b>	RCC Secretariat
<b>Duration:</b>	8 November 2021 – 20 December 2021
<b>Eligible:</b>	Independent consultant
<b>Reference Number:</b>	090-021

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### **I. PURPOSE**

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) to conceptualise the Western Balkans Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition (WB Coalition) through desk research and fieldwork, as well as to prepare the Charter for this Coalition. The consultancy also aims to bring together public and private institutions with the aim to address the development of necessary skills set for better competitiveness in the labour market in the region, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **II. BACKGROUND**

Common Regional Market (CRM) 2021-2024 Action Plan endorsed by WB Leaders at the Berlin Process Summit held on 10 November 2020 in Sofia represents a steppingstone for WB economies to better integrate into the pan-European market and consists of four key areas that have a transformative effect, starting with the four freedoms approach (free movement of goods, services, capital and people), increasing the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors, integrating the WB into the pan-European digital area and transforming the industrial base and innovation infrastructures.

The objectives and actions proposed under CRM build on the work and achievements of the Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) endorsed by Western Balkan Leaders in 2017 in Trieste with the aim of promoting further trade integration, introducing a dynamic regional investment space, facilitating regional mobility, and creating a digital integration agenda. In the area of digital skills, CRM has envisaged developing digital skills strategies as well as agreeing on short- and mid-term regional actions for digital upskilling.

Many training programmes dedicated to digital upskilling have been implemented over the years in the Western Balkans in line with the strategic goals of each economy. Despite this, in light of digitalisation efforts invested in the region as well as given the challenges induced by Covid-19, all Western Balkan economies have put great importance on digital skills and competence upgrading.

The Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition was launched by European Commission on 1 December 2016 as one of the ten key initiatives proposed under the New Skills Agenda for Europe presented in June 2016. The Coalition brings together the EU Member States, companies, social partners, non-profit organisations and education providers, who take action to tackle the lack of digital skills in Europe of four broad groups: all citizens, labour force, ICT professionals as well as digital skills in education. It includes over 30 organisations committed to further reduce the digital skills gap.

### **III DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support the conceptualisation of the Digital Skills and Job Coalition for the Western Balkans, including but not limited to the identification of potential representatives of private or public institutions willing to join the Coalition. Moreover, the consultancy will help the creation and development of the talent pool in the region and make a breakthrough in regional mobility. The consultancy will inter alia provide expert support in the preparation of potential internship programme(s) in line with the expertise and profile of identified members of the WB Coalition.

For the purpose of this consultancy, an independent consultant will be engaged to carry out all tasks defined in these Terms of Reference. This assignment targets all Western Balkan economies.

The scope of the consultancy includes the following:

1. Identify and validate potential members of the WB Coalition. Members should come from the ICT sector as well as public institutions having the capacity to offer internship/traineeship programmes, on-the-job training, training programmes, etc. contributing to the ICT development in each WB economy;
2. Provide expert advice on internship programmes for WB students across WB region and beyond as feasible.

#### **Specific tasks**

1. Identify at least 5 stakeholders that contribute to the development of ICT sector in each WB economy, such as ICT organisations, clusters, ICT/IT alliances, non-governmental organisations, academia, private companies specialised in ICT and/or provision of digital services, public institutions, etc. that could potentially be members of the WB Coalition. The identification should also take into account training programmes (internship programmes, employee professional development programmes, etc.) these stakeholders offer and the way they contribute to the development of human resources in the ICT sector;
2. Validate expertise and profile of the identified members of the WB Coalition using quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) methods;
3. In line with tasks 1. and 2. propose the concept of the WB Coalition, including the Charter of the WB Coalition, taking into account EU best practices and mirroring the EU Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition;
4. Provide expert advice on internship programmes for WB students across the WB region and beyond, as feasible, through co-financing schemes provided by Regional Cooperation Council and chosen stakeholders.

### **Deliverables**

1. Validated list of members of WB Coalition, including their field of expertise and type of training programmes offered as well as the concept and Charter of the Coalition;
2. Expert advice on internship programmes.

### **Lines of communication**

The expert will report to the RCC Secretariat. After completion of activities as defined in the timeframe for deliverables under these Terms of Reference, the report will be sent to the RCC Secretariat for review and approval.

### **Timeframe**

The level of expected engagement is 20 days within the period starting on 8 November 2021 and ending on 20 December 2021. A meeting with RCC shall be organised prior to the start of the work.

Deliverables	Due date
1. Validated list of members of WB Coalition, including the concept and Charter of the Coalition	3 December 2021
2. Expert advice on internship programmes	20 December 2021

## IV COMPETENCIES

### Qualifications:

<b>Education:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expert should have a degree in economics, business, ICT, social sciences, education or other areas directly related to the subject of work.</li> </ul>
<b>Experience:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in digital transformation projects as well as the development of human resources in the ICT sector, including but not limited to ICT training/training programmes for students/employees.</li> <li>• Managing projects on a regional, multiple-economies scale is considered an advantage.</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 programme development related to digital transformation.</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 an advantage.</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.

## **V      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.

## **IV      APPLICATION RULES**

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

### **Technical Offer**

*For individual consultants:*

- Letter of interest;
- CV, outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in Section IV - 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);
- Financial offer, as per budget breakdown, free format.

**The 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 bidder should take into account the following:

- Use a free format for the Budget providing the Global Price for the work to be provided.
- The fee rates should be broadly consistent with those applicable in the region.

**Applications need to be submitted by 4 November 2021 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.

**V 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:

<b>Evaluation Grid</b>	<b>Maximum Score</b>
<b>A. Technical offer (A.1+A.2+A.3)</b>	100
<b>A.1. Work experience, references list:</b> Relevant work experience; evidence of other contracts of the nature comparable to that of the Call; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	30
<b>A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultant:</b> CV satisfies the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference, education and experience demonstrate the professional capacity and experience required.	40

<b>A.3 Quality of the concept note:</b> Concept note describing the main issues, information, data sources, and tools to be employed by the expert as well as approach to the work to be undertaken.	30
<b>B. Financial Proposal / lowest price has maximum score</b>	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, a competency-based interview will be held with the selected bidder.**

### **Information on the selection of the most favourable bidder**

The RCC Secretariat shall inform candidates and bidders of the 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. A 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 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: SUBMISSION FORM**

**Open Call for Consultancy Services: Support the Regional Cooperation Council to prepare the concept for Western Balkans Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition**

**REF: 091-021**

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

1 SUBMITTED by:

	Name(s) and address(es) of the Entity submitting this Application
Full name of the entity	

2 CONTACT PERSON

Name	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
e-mail	

3 STATEMENT

[Name of the representative of 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 the 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 its staff, including its management, is not placed in a situation that could give rise to a 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	
Address	
Telephone	