

Open Call for Consultancy

TERMS OF REFERENCE: Support Western Balkan economies to establish Broadband Competence Offices (BCOs) where non-existent and reinforce the existing one(s)

Title: Support to establishment of Broadband Competence Offices (BCOs) in Western Balkans and reinforcement of the existing one(s)

RCC Department: Programme Department

Number of Consultants: 1 (one) International Expert

Reporting to: RCC Secretariat

Duration: 15 April 2020 – 15 June 2020

Deadline for Application: 5 April 2020

Terms of Reference:

I. PURPOSE

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support Western Balkans to establish BCOs and to reinforce the existing one(s), mirroring the practice of EU BCOs. The consultancy aims also to provide expert advice on a model of the BCO to be chosen in each WB economy, as well as provide advice on the key data, analyses and research and capacity building needs that would support setting up and proper functioning of the BCOs in the region.

II. BACKGROUND

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 2020 (SEE 2020) Strategy and is based on EU rules and principles as reflected in the Stabilisation and Association Agreements.

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 digital literacy. 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 a better life for the citizens.

In addition, Digital Agenda for 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.

Broadband networks are the foundation of digital transformation and critical to economic growth. Broadband development boosts the use of all digital services and improves the transparency of public administration. The region has put great emphasis on broadband deployment, hence development of high-speed broadband networks is of great importance for all WB economies. BCOs in Western Balkans, established in some economies while in others the work is in progress, mirror the practice of EU BCO. Networking among WB BCOs helps to share experience, information and knowledge while learning from each other's challenges and obstacles in supporting broadband development in each WB economy.

III. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and scope of the assignment

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support Western Balkans to establish BCOs and to reinforce the existing one(s). The broadband penetration rate in the region is lagging behind the EU average. Data from the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019 for WB show an overall improved digital performance in 5 economies compared to DESI 2018, though there is a need for substantial scaling up of digital transformation efforts. WB digital market is still very fragmented, with under-developed digital infrastructure, considerable disparities between urban and rural areas as well as an uneven level of harmonisation with the EU acquis and challenging enforcement constraints. Western Balkans economies are working toward the establishment of BCOs/BCO contact persons. BCOs are already established in Kosovo*¹, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia.

An international expert will be engaged for the purpose of this consultancy. This assignment targets all Western Balkans economies.

The scope of services under this assignment includes the following:

¹ 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

1. Identify best practices among EU MS in broadband development process governance, such as different models of BCOs;
2. Provide support to establishing BCOs where not established and expert advice on strengthening capacities of the existing ones;
3. Provide expert advice on the most important data, reports, analyses, monitoring tool(s) as well as capacity building needs for the network of institutions involved in BCOs formally and/or informally, etc.

Tasks

1. Identify best practices among EU MS in supporting broadband deployment (i.e. identify different models of BCOs in EU MS) with the aim of their potential replication in Western Balkans, as appropriate;
2. Map national structures/institutions governing broadband deployment in each Western Balkans economy (i.e. national structures/institutions responsible for planning, financing, implementation and monitoring of broadband deployment, as well as for drafting, adoption and implementation of legislation in the respective field);
3. Elaborate on the responsibilities, competencies and roles of each national structure/institution engaged formally or informally in broadband deployment governance in each Western Balkans economy;
4. Map any donor support for strengthening capacities of existing BCOs/BCO contact persons and provide expert advice on any capacity-building needs. This should cover all institutions involved in BCOs;
5. Provide expert advice on a tailor-made model of the BCO to be chosen and ways to reinforce the existing one(s) in each Western Balkans economy, factoring each economy needs, including the legal, technical and financial requirements and any other relevant information;
6. Provide advice on the key data, analyses and research that would support setting-up of the BCOs;
7. Provide advice on the monitoring and benchmarking system, including a knowledge database reporting current mapping of broadband, upcoming investments and good practice examples.

To achieve the objectives of the Terms of Reference, the expert will visit all WB economies and discuss all desk research findings with the relevant institutions. With regard to this, Digital Component Contact Points (Digital CCPs) responsible for coordination of actions under the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans should be the key contact(s) in each economy. The RCC will provide contact details of Digital CCPs if requested.

Deliverables

- Methodology and work plan;

- The draft report including all aspects defined in these Terms of Reference;
- The report incorporating all relevant comments provided by Western Balkans 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:

- Desk review of model and other related documents/reports on the existing BCOs in the Western Balkans as well as a desk review of different models of BCOs in EU MS;
- Desk review of all existing reports and/or assessments relevant to the key tasks covered by these Terms of Reference;
- Direct contacts with MAP REA Digital CCPs, if need be, to check any specific aspect of document preparation and stakeholder involvement;
- Any other methods applicable.

Lines of Communication

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

Timeframe

The engagement is expected to start on 15 April 2020 and end on 15 June 2020. The expert is expected to use up to 20 days for this assignment.

Deliverables	Due date (from mobilisation)
Methodology and work plan	5 working days after contract signature
Draft report for each WB economy including all aspects defined in these Terms of Reference	25 working days after contract signature
Final report incorporating all relevant comments provided by Western Balkans economies and the RCC Secretariat covering all aspects defined in these Terms of Reference	1 June 2020

IV COMPETENCIES

Qualifications:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree in engineering, law, economics, business, or other areas directly related to the subject of work
Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in the field of broadband development, EU legislation in the area of digital infrastructure and networks, etc.; ▪ Proven experience in supporting the establishment of BCO in any of the EU MS, either through direct or indirect advisory engagement is an advantage; ▪ Experience in working with government and/or EU institutions on developing strategic documents and programmes in the broadband sector. Experience in at least one broadband development project is an advantage; ▪ Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly; ▪ In-depth knowledge of the economies covered by the assignment; ▪ Demonstrable experience in writing and reporting on complex multi-sector or multi-country strategy development and implementation (samples of work to be provided); ▪ 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.
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.
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N.A.

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.

VI APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

Technical Offer:

- CV outlining relevant knowledge and experience;
- Application Submission Form (Annex I);
- Financial offer-lump sum;
- A concept note, up to 2 pages, elaborating 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.

Financial Offer-Budget:

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

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

Note: Please use free format of the Budget.

Application need to be submitted by 5 April 2020 to the following address:
ProcurementforRcc@rcc.int

VII 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 of Consulting Services.

The best value for money is established by weighing technical quality against price on a 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 ToRs, education and experience demonstrates professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the concept note: Concept note, elaborating proposed methodology for addressing and undertaking individual tasks, indicating key stakeholders to be included in the proposed approach.	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: [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:**SUBMISSION FORM****REF: 024-020**

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

1 SUBMITTED by:

Name	
Surname	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
e-mail	

3 **DECLARATION**

[Name] _____ hereby declares that we have examined and accepted without reserve or restriction the entire contents of the Call for Consultancy 024-020.

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 call for experts on the basis of supplied documentation subject of this call, which comprise our technical offer and our financial offer.

Name and Surname	
Signature	
Date	