

Open Call for Consulting Services

Subject: Common Regional Market Action Plan 2021 – 2024 / Regional Industrial and Innovation Area – Sustainable tourism

Title: Technical Assistance to Regional Tourism Branding Roadmap for Western Balkans

RCC Department: Programme Department

Eligibility: Consulting companies

Reporting to: RCC Secretariat

Duration: April 2024 – 25 August 2024

Reference Number: 025-024

Terms of Reference:

I. BACKGROUND

In November 2020, the leaders of the Western Balkans (WB): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia endorsed the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan (AP) 2021 – 2024¹, comprising targeted measures in four key areas: Regional Trade, Regional Investment, Regional Digital, and Regional Industrial and Innovation Area. The overarching goal of the Regional Industrial and Innovation Area is to transform industrial sectors, preparing them for today's realities and tomorrow's challenges. This encompasses tourism, which significantly contributes to the region's overall sustainability and competitiveness by enhancing the regional tourism product through branding initiatives and fostering competitiveness with strategic marketing and destination management practices.

Given the establishment of the Common Regional Market Action Plan as a transformative tool, this call for Technical Assistance for WB regional branding in tourism is of paramount importance. By enhancing the branding of regional tourism and aligning it with the Action Plan's goals, the

* 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 [Regional Cooperation Council | Common Regional Market \(rcc.int\)](https://rcc.int/)

initiative aims not only to elevate the visibility and appeal of the Western Balkans as a tourism destination but also to enhance its competitiveness and attractiveness to potential investors. Considerable progress was made in the past, particularly through the RCC's Promotion, Policy and Pilots (PPP) Tourism project. This foundation will be leveraged to address new challenges and opportunities following COVID-19's impact on the industry, including shifts in tourist origins, motives, and trends.

Through targeted branding efforts, the WB region can effectively position itself as a compelling choice for tourists and investors alike, fostering economic growth and sustainable development.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objective of the assignment

The primary objective of this Technical Assistance (TA) is to deliver a comprehensive roadmap and actionable toolkit for advancing tourism branding initiatives in the Western Balkans. The approach entails identifying and leveraging the region's allure to tourists by presenting and promoting it as a distinctive tourism destination. This involves pinpointing and capitalising on strategic opportunities to enhance the region's appeal to both tourists and policymakers. Additionally, the Technical Assistance will craft a comprehensive map of the Western Balkans, showcasing key spots that embody the main characteristics and themes outlined in the branding strategy. This visual aid will serve as a guide for tourists and stakeholders, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of the region's unique offerings. The core challenge lies in harmonising the diverse facets of the region into a cohesive brand identity while also preserving the unique essence of each economy.

Specific Tasks

This assignment should focus on the following specific tasks:

Task 1. Produce a tourism assessment sheet for each economy, highlighting new and emerging tourism potentials of the Western Balkans, including cultural, historical, and natural attractions. Analyse existing branding efforts and their effectiveness in promoting tourism in the region by:

- Creating an immersive guide detailing the tourism potential of the Western Balkans, encompassing its captivating cultural, historical, and natural wonders;
- Assessing the effectiveness of previous branding initiatives in fostering regional tourism growth, leveraging expertise from the economies' tourism departments, agencies, boards, and other pertinent stakeholders to extract valuable insights. These insights will inform the future strategy, ensuring alignment with evolving tourism market dynamics and trends;
- Pinpointing lucrative target markets and discerning prevailing tourism trends to meticulously customise branding strategies, ensuring tangible and impactful outcomes.

Task 2. Create the Region's Branding Spots Map by identifying key attractions, themes, and characteristics that encapsulate the essence of the region. This provides information for tourists and stakeholders to effectively explore and engage with the branded destination. The creation of the map includes:

- Identifying potential spots and developing a map to showcase their unique attractions, through research and consultation with stakeholders that represent the region's diverse cultural, historical, and natural heritage;
- Crafting compelling narratives that highlight the diverse cultural, historical, and natural assets of the Western Balkans in a captivating and unified manner.

Task 3. Develop a strategic framework by formulating a robust strategic blueprint that outlines the clear objectives of branding initiatives and ensures tangible results. This includes:

- Devising innovative strategies to preserve the unique identity of each economy within the region while forging a cohesive tourism brand;
- Creating impactful messaging strategies, actionable implementation plans, and target demographics to gauge the success of branding initiatives.

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 sources;
- ii. Communication/interviews/consultations with the representatives of the WB economies (relevant institutions, private sector, etc.) and relevant regional and international organizations;
- iii. Any other method applicable.

III LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeline

The engagement is expected to start in April 2024 and end on 25 August 2024. The selected bidder should submit a Gantt chart with a clear overview of planned activities.

Lines of Communication

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

IV REQUIRED OUTPUTS / REPORTING

The following deliverables will be produced and transferred to the RCC Secretariat during the course of the assignment, as per the timeframe specified below:

	Deliverables	Due date
1.	Detailed Work Plan agreed with the RCC	15 April 2024
2.	Inception report/Economies Branding Tourism Assessment sheet (Task 1)	25 May 2024
3.	Development of the region's spots map (Task 2)	10 July 2024
4.	Draft Final Report, including Strategic framework (Task 3)	5 August 2024
5.	Final Report, including Strategic framework (Task 3)	20 August 2024

V REQUIREMENTS

Qualifications for consultant/s:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An advanced university degree (Master's Degree or equivalent) in tourism, economics, public policy, or other field of relevance for the position.
Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in policy advice, research, industrial and tourism development, analysis and/or project implementation in the area, SME support and development or other related policies;▪ Proven professional record of working with international and/or regional organisations;▪ Proven professional record of working on tourism related researches or strategies;▪ Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly, preferably 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

	<p>actors including government representatives, international organisations' representatives, business community, civil society institutions, donors and other stakeholders;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advanced computer skills (MS Office and internet software).
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/s:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master's Degree (PhD is an advantage) in economics, tourism, public policy or equivalent and relevant to the position.
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 tourism development and promotion, SME support and development (with a focus on tourism) or other related policies; ▪ Experience in working with government institutions in developing strategic frameworks, strategies, programmes, and dedicated policies to incentivise the tourism, in particular; ▪ Proven professional record of 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.

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.

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;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer

For companies:

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company;
- Copy of Company's Registration Certificate;
- 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;
- An outline work programme of a maximum of 5 pages describing the main issues, sources of information to be used, timeline and methodology. The work programme should include the initial outline of the content of the assessment;
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Signed Statements of Availability (Annex I).

Financial Offer (Free format)

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;
- When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account the following:
- Use a free format for the Budget providing the Global Price for the work to be provided.
 - [Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 25,000]
 - The fee rates should be broadly consistent with those applicable in the region.

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 need to be submitted by 5 April 2024.

VII EVALUATION RULES

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: CV satisfies the criteria set forth in the ToR, education and experience demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the Work Plan Work plan outlining proposed action by the consultant, sources of information to be used, timeline and tools to be employed by the consultant;	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 evaluation, a 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 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 appeal.

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: STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY

REF: 025-024

Technical Assistance to Regional Tourism Branding Roadmap for Western Balkans

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:

[illegible]