

Open Call for Consultancy Services

Reference Number 056-020

Title:	Development of a study
Subject:	Integrating biodiversity elements of the European Green Deal and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in the biodiversity frameworks of WB economies
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Eligible:	Respective consulting companies or individual consultants within bidding consortia
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	31 st July until 18 th December 2020
Deadline for application:	26 th July 2020
Reference Number:	056-020

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Integrating biodiversity elements of the European Green Deal, notably the EU Biodiversity Strategy*, and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans† in the political and technical biodiversity frameworks of WB economies

I PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to perform an analysis of the situation in the Western Balkan (WB) economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia) and develop a study on how to integrate the biodiversity elements of the European Green Deal (in particular the recently adopted EU

* <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0380&from=EN>

† The assignment is conditional upon the launch of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCP 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Biodiversity Strategy) and the Green Agenda for the WB in the relevant political and technical frameworks in WB economies, supporting on this way quick integration of the key objectives and planning the implementation of activities to halt biodiversity loss and ensure its sustainable use in the region. In line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the objective would be to address main drivers of biodiversity loss, further protect and restore nature, develop nature-based solutions to tackle climate change and develop specific governance on biodiversity to tackle, among others, environmental crime and wildlife trafficking. In addition, in the context of post-Covid19 crisis, the objective is to contribute to building the region's resilience to future threats such as climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks, including by protecting wildlife.

Background information

General overview

The continuing loss of biodiversity and the effects of climate change are expected to exacerbate already severe pressure on ecosystems and affect its contributions to people's wellbeing[§]. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment reports that nature across most of the globe has been significantly altered by multiple human drivers, with the great majority of indicators showing a rapid decline of biodiversity and ecosystem services^{**}. This loss impacts the production of necessary elements that we depend on for food security, clean water, clean air, shelter and sustainable production that maintains the livelihood and the economic prosperity of a large proportion of our society.

The European Green Deal is a response by the European Commission to enhance the sustainability by promoting a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where economic growth is decoupled from biodiversity loss^{††}. It sets a strategy to protect, conserve and enhance the natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts. However, the environmental ambition of the Green Deal will not be achieved by the European Union acting alone. The European Green Deal itself recognises the importance of supporting the EU's immediate neighbours, stressing that the "ecological transition for Europe can only be fully effective if the EU's immediate neighbourhood also takes effective action". Furthermore, during the Berlin Process Summit held in Poznan, the Western Balkans Leaders expressed their intention "to work together in the launching of an ambitious Green Agenda, to contribute to the leading efforts of the EU in fighting climate change, protecting the environment and to unlock the economic potential of the green, low carbon and circular economy in the region."^{‡‡}

The reinforcement of cross-border and regional cooperation in Europe is vital to restore and more effectively protect the natural heritage and the most important areas that provide ecosystem services and goods that underpin Europeans' wellbeing. Enhanced cooperation for

[§] IPBES (2018) Summary for policymakers of the regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Europe and Central Asia of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany

^{**} IPBES (2019) Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany

^{††} European Commission (2019) The European Green Deal. COM(2019) 640 Final. 24pp

^{‡‡} <https://www.rcc.int/docs/472/chairs-conclusions-western-balkans-summit-poznan>

nature conservation between the European Union and the Western Balkans can lead to significant benefits. The EU Biodiversity Strategy identifies specific measures to halt biodiversity loss, enhance restoration of ecosystems and protection of endangered species. Integrating this framework into Western Balkans economies' local and regional planning, legislation, and budget can contribute to EU accession process and support implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Furthermore, the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, expected to be launched later this year, confirms the EU's determination for concentrated action which is not limited to administrative borders of the Union, and necessity to strengthen cooperation across the whole continent.

WB context

The Western Balkans region is a unique biodiversity hotspot and as such represents also a conservation priority for Europe. The region harbours abundant freshwater resources, unique karstic ecosystems, a high level of endemism, and the majority of the continent's large pristine landscapes^{§§}. In such a region where large ecological landscapes and various biodiversity values cut across numerous national boundaries, the regional approach to conservation is particularly relevant and gets its full justification.

The Biodiversity Task Force of South East Europe (hereinafter: BDTF) was established in 2017 under the auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council as an intergovernmental technical and advisory body to facilitate effective implementation of biodiversity policies in the framework of accession to the European Union. The Task Force was formally acknowledged by a Joint Ministerial Declaration on the occasion of the 2nd High-level Panel on the Environment and Climate Action, held during the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Bonn, in November 2017. The BDTF presents a unique organisational structure composed of technical focal points nominated by the WB economies, associate members including civil society organisations and a secretariat held by the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

BDTF has strengthened regional cooperation for biodiversity and promoted significant progress towards the Environmental Dimension of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy. BDTF is an adequate forum to bring the Western Balkans together to identify needs and priorities for a regional biodiversity agenda (in alignment with the EU *acquis*) and plan its implementation. In cooperation with DG NEAR and IUCN, the RCC has already organised a consultative meeting with the BDTF discussing the key elements, regional priorities, possible form and future implementation of the Green Agenda in the region.

II DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and Scope of the Assignment

The objective of this assignment is to analyse the new European biodiversity framework (as explained above: The Green Deal, Green Agenda and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, etc.), as well as the situation in WB in the area of biodiversity, to identify needs, define priority actions and develop a resource mobilisation plan for a regional biodiversity agenda for WB. This analysis should result in a study which will:

- Analyse possibilities to halt biodiversity loss and address its main causes;
- Consider opportunities to increase coverage of protected and biodiversity-rich areas;

^{§§} Vasiljevic M, Pokrajac S, Erg B (2018) State of nature conservation systems in South-Eastern Europe

- Identify priorities and propose measures to restore degraded ecosystems;
- Define a common position for the next Conference of the Parties of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CoP15), to be held in Kunming next year;
- Define concrete steps for reinforcing cross-border cooperation in WB, and also with the EU;
- Provide technical information to support key planning processes in the region such as the RCC South East Europe 2030 strategy, facilitate integration of the European Green Deal into regional and local policies and support implementation of the Green Agenda for Western Balkans;
- Identify key needs and opportunities for streamlining biodiversity requirements in other relevant policy areas with the aim of improving sustainable development of the region;
- Identify priority actions both at regional and bilateral levels;
- Factor the implications and prospective solutions (to the extent possible) related to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact in particular in the area of biodiversity.

In consultations with relevant stakeholders, the study will define priority actions to align current policies with the new EU Biodiversity Strategy and support its implementation. As such, the produced study should represent a strategic framework for the region which should include an action plan with concrete actions to be implemented. It will take into account that the economies are at different levels in terms of transposition of EU *acquis* and provide useful information for concrete initiatives for each economy. Based on the needs assessment and the priority actions, the study will estimate the costs for implementation and suggest alternatives to mobilise resources. The main conclusions of the study will be translated into policy recommendations and an action plan. The regional study and priority identification will also support the development of the RCC 2030 Strategy. The study has to be developed in close consultation with RCC, while the RCC will ensure consultations with the Environmental Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA) and the European Commission (DG NEAR and DG ENVIRONMENT) in order to ensure synergy and maximisation of benefits for WB beneficiaries.

Specific Tasks

The scope of services under this assignment includes the following main activities:

Task 1:

Coordinate preparation of the study, including the needed consultations, perform desk research, and analyse the Green Deal, the Green Agenda for WB, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, as well as relevant context in WB in the area of biodiversity to identify needs, define priority actions and develop a resource mobilisation plan for a regional biodiversity agenda for WB.

Task 2:

Develop a draft paper which will put in context the two elements of task 1 (EU vs WB), and elaborate on the objectives of the study as given in the first paragraph of this section.

Task 3:

Promote a participatory process, consult key stakeholders to integrate their views into the assessment, and organise a regional workshop to compile information from the WB

economies, EPPA representatives and other relevant partners and stakeholders. The workshop has to be organised within the scope of the assignment (logistic, organisation, costs).

Task 4:

Prepare a final report (the study with action plan), participate in information dissemination events (RWG Env meetings) and present findings, developed scenarios, plans for actions and recommendations to policy makers and other relevant stakeholders.

Lines of Communication

The team of experts will submit all reports and timesheets to the RCC Secretariat for review and approval of deliverables. The team of experts will work closely with RCC which will provide guidelines for efficient finalisation of the assignment. The Team Leader will be responsible for coordination of the team and communication with RCC staff.

Timeframe

The team of experts is expected to use up to 50 working days for this assignment, between 31st July and 18th December, and organise a regional workshop as per Task 3.

Deliverable	Due date
TASK 1 – It will include coordination activities, consultations and desk research as explained above.	4 weeks
TASK 2 – It will include developing draft paper which will address the objectives listed above, including permanent consultations with relevant actors.	12 weeks
TASK 3 – It will include final consultations and organisation of a regional workshop. The organisational, logistics and financial aspects of the regional consultations have to be covered within the scope of assignment.	3 weeks
TASK 4 – It will include finalisation of the document and other deliverables. The final draft of the study should also include incorporating comments and recommendations received by RCC.	1 weeks
Participation in a dissemination event ^{***} - to be organised by RCC to present results (regular RWG Env meeting).	By the end of the year / beginning of 2021 (1 day)

*** Travel and accommodation costs will be borne by RCC

NOTE:

The team of experts is obliged to deliver the final draft as a proofread document in English (UK English).

Each deliverable is subject to approval by RCC.

Reporting

The team of experts will work under the direct guidance of the RCC Expert on Connectivity and will report directly to him. Reporting and communication with RCC is the responsibility of the Team Leader.

III PROFILE AND COMPETENCIES

The team of experts should have and prove ample knowledge and experience in the field of environmental protection with the focus on biodiversity issues, as well as good analytical skills. The team of experts should also possess a good overview of the situation in this area in the WB region, experience in performing analytical work, data collection, development of various scenarios, as well as in drafting high quality reports and policy recommendations. The team of experts should be consisted of one Team Leader and at least one other team member, all of whom have to fulfil the following qualification requirements:

Qualifications: Team Leader

Education:	Advanced university degree in environmental sciences, biology or other relevant fields necessary to understand the main trends, challenges and situation in the WB in the area of environmental protection and sustainable use of biodiversity.
Experience:	<p>Qualifications and Skills Required</p> <p>Extensive theoretical knowledge in the relevant fields and minimum 7 years of practical work and/or research experience in environmental protection, environmental management, biology, including development of scientific papers, defining various scenarios and modelling;</p> <p>Ample understanding of the existing strategic and policy frameworks in the areas of environment and biological diversity, both in the EU and WB;</p> <p>Experience with project implementation, planning and analysis, resource mobilisation and project management;</p> <p>Proven understanding of the situation in relevant areas in Western Balkans;</p> <p>Analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly;</p> <p>Experience in performing analytical studies, working with indicators, and drafting recommendations for policy makers.</p>

Language requirements:	Fluency in English, as the official working language of RCC; Knowledge of local languages in WB will be considered an asset.
Other:	Full ICT literacy and familiarity with MS Office (or alternative business applications) as a tool necessary for implementation of the assignment; Ability to be flexible and respond to changes as part of the review and feedback process.

Qualifications: Team Member(s)

Education:	University degree in environmental sciences, biology or other relevant fields necessary to understand the main trends, challenges and situation in the WB in the area of environmental protection and sustainable use of biodiversity; Postgraduate diplomas in related areas will be considered an asset.
Experience:	<p>Qualifications and Skills Required</p> <p>Extensive theoretical knowledge in the relevant fields and minimum 5 years of practical work and/or research experience in environmental protection, environmental management, biology, including development of scientific papers, defining various scenarios and modelling;</p> <p>Ample understanding of the existing strategic and policy frameworks in the areas of environment and biological diversity, both in the EU and WB;</p> <p>Experience with project implementation, planning and analysis, resource mobilisation and project management;</p> <p>Proven understanding of the situation in relevant areas in Western Balkans;</p> <p>Analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly;</p> <p>Experience in performing analytical studies, working with indicators, and drafting recommendations for policy makers.</p>
Language requirements:	Fluency in English, as the official working language of RCC; Knowledge of local languages in WB will be considered an asset.
Other:	Full ICT literacy and familiarity with MS Office (or alternative business applications) as a tool necessary for implementation of the assignment;

	Ability to be flexible and respond to changes as part of the review and feedback process.
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IV. 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.

V. 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 Competencies section of the Terms of References;
- List of reports, papers, and other documents that expert has drafted;
- Methodological 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 (Annex II).

For companies and consortia of individual consultants:

- Company profile including a brief description (up to 2 pages) of the company. In case of a bidding consortium, the 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);
- CVs of experts, (stating the key expert and experts), outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in Competencies section of the Terms of References, along with contact details of referees;
- Methodological 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, as described in the Terms of Reference;
- 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 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:

- Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 16,000
- When preparing the financial offer, the applicant should take into account that the fee rates should be broadly consistent with those applicable in the region.
- The offer should also include the costs of travel to the Beneficiaries if required by Terms of Reference, providing it as a separate budget line.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 26 July by 17:00 Central European Time to the following address 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
A.1. Work experience, references list: 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
A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultant(s): CV(s) satisfy the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference, education and experiences demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the Concept Note: An outline of concept 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. Financial Offer/ 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, 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****REF: 056-020 Open Call for Consultancy Services**

Subject: Integrating biodiversity elements of the European Green Deal and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in the biodiversity frameworks of WB economies

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: 056-020

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