



Open Call for Consulting Services

Title:	Support to the RCC Secretariat with Development of the Western Balkans Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2030
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Eligible:	Individual Consultant
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	July 2025 – January 2026
Application Deadline:	30 June 2025
Reference Number:	044-025

I. BACKGROUND

The Hamburg Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB), endorsed at the First GAWB Ministerial Meeting, welcomed the strategic guidance provided in the Analytical Paper for the development of Western Balkans Biodiversity Strategic Plan (WBBSP) 2030, committing the WB6 to proceed with the development of this regional document through the Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans (BDTF WB) and Regional Working Group on GAWB (RWG GAWB).

The WBBSP 2030 will be a central reference for aligning Western Balkans Six biodiversity conservation and restoration efforts with global and European frameworks. It will serve as a high-level strategic platform to guide coordinated action among the WB6, promote regional integration, and contribute to achieving the goals of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and the GAWB.

The consultancy will closely interact with and build upon two other complementary consultancies:

- The **WB Biodiversity Policy Analysis**, managed by RCC, evaluates existing biodiversity policies, institutional frameworks, and their alignment with the GAWB, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the GBF. This analysis, available at the start of the consultancy, will help identify key governance challenges and gaps to inform strategic priorities.
- The **WB Biodiversity Report**, managed by IUCN and running in parallel with the BSP development, will assess the current state, trends, and future dynamics of biodiversity and ecosystems in the region. It will provide critical evidence to support the formulation of strategic goals, identify key threats and opportunities, and address knowledge gaps.

Together, these three processes will form an integrated foundation for the Western Balkans Six to move towards a nature-positive, climate-resilient, and sustainable future—through a shared vision, measurable targets, and coordinated regional action on biodiversity.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and scope of the assignment

This assignment will produce the first draft of the **Western Balkans 2030 Biodiversity Strategic Plan (WBBSP 2030)**. This regional document will include the following core components: a **shared regional vision and mission** for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use by 2030; **strategic goals and measurable targets**, aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the GBF, covering areas such as protected and conserved areas, species and habitats, ecological connectivity, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable use; **time-bound actions and regional commitments** to be delivered by 2030; **indicators and monitoring framework** at both regional and national levels to track progress and identify implementation gaps; **assessment of financing needs** and identification of financial instruments and mechanisms to support implementation; **implementation mechanisms and institutional roles**, including stakeholder participation models and opportunities for regional cooperation; and **timeline and milestones** to guide delivery and assess progress.

Specific Tasks

The tasks specified herewith are:

1. Refining the Methodology and Work Plan

- 1.1 Develop a detailed inception report outlining the refined methodology, timeline, and approach for stakeholder engagement;
- 1.2 Coordinate with RCC and IUCN to ensure coherence with the parallel WB Biodiversity Report and the completed WB Biodiversity Policy Analysis;
- 1.3 Identify and align key sources of information and relevant ongoing regional initiatives.

2. Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- 2.1 Design and implement a participatory consultation process involving regional and economy-level stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society, scientific experts, and intergovernmental platforms;
- 2.2 Support organisation and facilitation of regional workshops and validation meetings, in coordination with RCC and IUCN;
- 2.3 Ensure that diverse inputs are reflected in the WBBSP 2030 development process and appropriately documented.

3. Drafting Core Strategic Elements

- 3.1 Prepare an initial draft of the shared vision, strategic goals, and measurable targets, aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the GBF, and GAWB;
- 3.2 Define indicators for monitoring and reporting, both at the regional and economy levels;
- 3.3 Identify regional priorities, commitments, and implementation milestones to be achieved by 2030.

4. Preparing the Draft WBBSP 2030

- 4.1 Compile all relevant components into a draft WBBSP 2030, integrating findings from consultations, the Biodiversity Policy Analysis, and the WB Biodiversity Report;
- 4.2 Submit the draft for review and feedback from RCC, IUCN, and the BDFT WB, and RWG GAWB;
- 4.3. Revise the draft based on consolidated feedback.

5. Finalising WBBSP 2030

- 5.1 Produce the final version of the WBBSP 2030, incorporating all inputs from the validation process;
- 5.2. Prepare an Executive Summary and supporting annexes, including a summary of stakeholder consultations and methodology;
- 5.3. Ensure that the final WBBSP 2030 is ready for presentation to and endorsement by the BDFT WB.

6. Coordination and Reporting

- 6.1. Maintain regular communication with RCC and IUCN focal points;
- 6.2. Provide quarterly progress updates and brief reports to RCC and IUCN, summarising completed tasks, next steps, and any identified risks or challenges;
- 6.3. Ensure timely delivery of all agreed outputs in accordance with the ToR.

Methodology

The expert is expected to propose the best methodological approach for undertaking this task. However, the following guiding principles should be taken into consideration:

- 1. Desk review/research and data collection, processing, validation, visualisation, and interpretation, notably the WB Biodiversity Policy Analysis and emerging findings from the WB Biodiversity Report;
- 2. Communication/interviews/consultations with the representatives of regional organisations, national administrations and other relevant stakeholders in the respective areas to collect qualitative inputs;
- 3. Any other method applicable.

This assignment will be developed in close consultations with the RCC Secretariat in several stages.

RCC is responsible to provide all contacts necessary to fulfil the tasks provided in this Terms of Reference.

Lines of Communication

- The experts will report to the RCC Secretariat. Upon completion of activities as defined in the timeframe within 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.

Timeframe

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

III. REQUIRED OUTPUTS/REPORTING

	Deliverables	Due date
1.	<p>Inception report that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) refined methodology and detailed work plan, including timeline, coordination mechanisms, and consultation approach ii) initial stakeholder mapping and communication plan iii) identification of key data sources, entry points, and synergies with the WB Biodiversity Report and WB Biodiversity Policy Analysis 	<p>Within 3 weeks of contract start date</p>
2.	<p>Outline of the document which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) shared regional vision and mission for biodiversity ii) proposed strategic goals and outcome-level targets aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and GBF iii) corresponding indicators and monitoring framework (regional and economy-level) iv) outline of regional commitments and milestones towards 2030 	<p>By early-September 2025</p>
3.	<p>Draft WBBSP 2030, which includes stakeholders' inputs and findings from WB Biodiversity Report and Policy Analysis</p>	<p>Mid October – November 2025</p>

4.	Final WBBSP 2030 for formal endorsement by BDTF WB and RWG GAWB	No later than 15 January 2026
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IV. COMPETENCES

Expert Qualifications:

Criteria related to the experts delivering the service¹

Education:	<p>A Master's degree in environmental sciences, engineering, economy, law, statistics, or other areas related to the subject of this assignment.</p> <p>A relevant PhD degree is an advantage.</p>
Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in biodiversity and nature conservation, especially in the context of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, Natura 2000, and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; ▪ In-depth knowledge of biodiversity governance systems and institutional frameworks in the Western Balkans Six; ▪ Experience in working with governments, statistical offices, regional organisations, and/or EU institutions on developing monitoring and reporting mechanisms in areas relevant to the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans is considered an advantage; ▪ At least two similar (in scope and complexity) projects completed in the last three years; ▪ Proven analytical skills, data collection, processing, verification and visualisation abilities; ▪ Demonstrable experience in writing and reporting on complex multi-sector or multi-country programme implementation; ▪ Proven communication skills and ability to work in an environment requiring liaison and collaboration with multiple stakeholders including government representatives, businesses, civil society institutions, international and regional organisations and other stakeholders to collect and verify data, and consult on each deliverable.
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 desirable.
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N.A.

Core Values

¹ These criteria apply to the main expert(s) and not for administrative or logistical team members

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling 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.

V. QUALITY CONTROL

The expert should ensure internal quality control during the implementation 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 the findings reported are duly substantiated and that conclusions are supported by relevant judgment criteria.

The views expressed in the reports 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 upon the expert, they should clearly explain the reasons for their final decision in a comments table.

VI. APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer

- Letter of interest;
- CV(s) including relevant knowledge and experience, as well as reference list including contact details (e-mail addresses) of referees;

- An outline work programme of a maximum of 3 pages describing the main issues, sources of information to be used, timeline and methodology.
- List of references for relevant activities implemented over the past years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;

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 applicant should take into account the following:

- Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 14,000. The offers above the threshold will not be considered.
- Use a free format for the budget providing the global price for the work to be provided.

NOTE:

Fee rates should be broadly consistent with the EU framework rates for these types of professional services for international consultants.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 30th of June 2025. The offers should be submitted through the web site link [Apply now](#).

VII. 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 to that of the Call; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	35
A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultant(s): CV(s) satisfy the outlined Terms of Reference, education and experience demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the work programme:	30

An outline of the work programme describing the main issues, information, data sources, research and analytical tools to be employed by consultant, as well as the timeline.	
B. Financial Offer/ lowest price has a 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 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