

Open Call for Consulting Services

Title:	Support to the RCC Secretariat in Advancing Regional Action on Single-Use Plastics Phase-Out and Circular Plastic Packaging Solutions in the Western Balkans 6
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Eligible:	Consulting companies/ consortia of individual consultants or individual professionals
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	August - December 2025
Reference Number:	055-025

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

I. BACKGROUND

On 10 November 2020, at the Berlin Process Summit in Sofia, the Western Balkans Six (WB6) reached a key milestone by endorsing the Leaders' Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, thereby aligning their strategic vision with the European Green Deal. This commitment was further reinforced at the EU–Western Balkans Summit in Brdo pri Kranju in October 2021, where the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration* (2021–2030) was officially adopted.

The Action Plan translates high-level political commitments into concrete measures, with clearly defined timelines, responsible institutions, and a robust framework for coordination and monitoring. It includes ambitious measures under its Circular Economy and Depollution pillars, including the reduction of plastic waste and marine litter.

Building on this, the 2023 Regional Joint Statement on Plastic Pollution—endorsed in Tirana—set a clear political mandate for regional cooperation to reduce land- and sea-based plastic pollution, develop Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) systems, and ensure circularity in plastic packaging.

It targets the phase-out of the most polluting single-use plastics (SUPs) and the introduction of regionally aligned systems for reusable, recyclable, or compostable plastic packaging. It includes alignment with the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (EU) 2019/904, EU Plastics Strategy

(COM(2018)28), and Circular Economy Action Plan (COM(2020)98), as well as with marine litter goals of the Barcelona Convention.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives of the assignment

The objective of this consultancy is to provide expert technical support to the RCC Secretariat in implementing the Joint Statement by:

- Assessing the legal, institutional, and implementation landscape in WB6 related to plastics;
- Recommending harmonised policy and legal options for the phase-out of SUPs and improved circularity of plastic packaging;
- Supporting the development of monitoring indicators and regionally coordinated implementation pathways.

A company/consortium of experts/ individual professionals will be engaged for this consultancy, hereinafter referred to as “the Consultant”.

This assignment targets all Western Balkans 6 economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo^{*}, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

III. SCOPE OF WORK

Specific Tasks

The consultant will:

- Review existing legislation, strategies, and implementation mechanisms related to plastic packaging and SUPs in all WB6 economies;
- Assess the alignment with EU legislation and regional commitments (e.g. EU SUP Directive, Plastics Strategy, Barcelona Convention Regional Plan);
- Identify legislative gaps, barriers to enforcement, and institutional weaknesses;
- Provide tailored recommendations for WB6 policy alignment and regional coordination, including pathways for:
 - **Phasing out top 5 most littered SUPs;**
 - **Establishing fully functional EPR systems for plastic packaging;**
 - **Achieving targets on recyclability, reusability, compostability, and recycled content in plastic packaging;**

^{*} 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

- **Promoting regional reuse and refill models;**
- Support the RCC in developing indicators to monitor progress;
- Participate in coordination and validation sessions with WB6 representatives and regional stakeholders.

Methodology

The selected Consultant 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;
2. Communication/interviews/consultations with the representatives of regional organisations, WB6 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.

II. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeline

The engagement is expected to start in August 2025 and end in December 2025.

Lines of Communication

- The task will be implemented in close consultation with the RCC Secretariat.
- The Consultant will submit all reports and timesheets to the RCC Secretariat for review and approval of deliverables.
- The RCC will provide guidelines for efficient finalisation of the assignment.
- The Team Leader will be responsible for the coordination of the team, and communication with RCC staff.
- The Team Leader should keep frequent communication with the RCC in order to discuss all open issues and guide the assignment towards its successful completion.
- As appropriate, meetings with RCC will be organised to agree on expectations and deliverables.

III. 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	
Deliverable	Description	Timeline	Deliverable
1. Legal and policy analysis	Assessment report on plastic-related frameworks, gaps, and enforcement challenges in WB6	September 2025	1. Legal and policy analysis
2. Recommendations report	Tailored economy-level and regional policy and regulatory recommendations aligned with EU policy + targeted interviews with relevant stakeholders from WB6	Mid October 2025	2. Recommendations report
3. Indicators framework	Proposal for regional monitoring indicators and targets	Mid-November 2025	3. Indicators framework
4. Validation support	Participation in 1–2 consultation events with WB6 stakeholders and regional partners	Throughout contract 2025	4. Validation support
5. Final version	Integrated and finalised version of reports, incorporating RCC and partner feedback	December 2025	5. Final version

IV. REQUIREMENTS

The Consultant should meet the following requirements:

- Advanced university degree in environmental policy, law, waste management, or related fields;
- At least 7 years of professional experience in policy development or implementation in the field of waste management, circular economy, or plastics regulation;
- Demonstrated knowledge of EU plastics legislation, including the Single-Use Plastics Directive, EU Plastics Strategy, and Circular Economy Action Plan;
- Familiarity with policy and regulatory frameworks in the Western Balkans 6 region;

- Experience working with international or regional organisations and multi-stakeholder processes;
- Strong analytical, drafting, and communication skills;
- Fluency in English is required; knowledge of one or more Western Balkans 6 languages is an asset.

The team of relevant experts should fulfil the following qualification requirements:

Qualifications:

Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advanced university degree (Master's Degree or equivalent) in economy, ecology, environmental sciences, or other relevant fields necessary to understand the main trends, challenges, and the situation in the WB6 in the area of CE, waste management and plastics; ▪ PhD is an advantage.
Experience and qualifications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extensive theoretical knowledge in the relevant fields and a minimum of 7 years of practical work and/or research experience in the relevant areas for a team leader and team members respectively; ▪ At least three similar (in scope and complexity) projects completed in the last five years, particularly in the WB6; ▪ Experience in data collection and processing, modelling, developing scenarios and developing scientific papers and reports; ▪ Ample and proven understanding of the existing strategic and policy frameworks and the situation in the climate policy area in the EU and the WB region; ▪ Analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly in English language; ▪ Experience in performing analytical studies, working with indicators, and drafting recommendations for policymakers; • 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, business community, civil society

	institutions, donors and other stakeholders.
Language requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fluency in English, as the official working language of the RCC; ▪ Knowledge of local languages in WB 6 will be considered an asset.
Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full ICT literacy and familiarity with MS Office (or alternative business applications) as a tool necessary for the implementation of the assignment; ▪ Ability to be flexible and respond to changes as part of the review and feedback process.

Core Values

- Demonstrates integrity and fairness by modelling RCC 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;
- 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 Consultant 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 Consultant 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 Consultant, they should clearly explain the reasons for their final decision in a comments table.

V. APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer:

The technical offer needs to contain the following:

For companies and consortia of experts

- 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;
- Copy of Company's/Institution's Registration Certificate;
- In case of bidding consortia of individual consultants participating in this Call, they must indicate the members and show how the work is divided between them. Specifically, all members must name the team leader and authorise this member to represent the consortium and receive payments on behalf of the other members. A corresponding written authorised power of attorney must be attached to the bid;
- CVs of key members of the project team, outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference, along with contact details of referees;
- Financial records - company's balance sheet and profit-and-loss statement for the past 2 years (only in case of bidding of consulting companies);
- A concept note of up to 5 pages, concisely and clearly elaborating the proposed methodology for addressing and undertaking each activity, relevant documents to be taken into account and the concept for the successful finalisation of the assignment; 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 7 years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Signed Statement of Availability (Annex I).

For individual professionals

- CV outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference, along with contact details of referees;
- A concept note of up to 5 pages, concisely and clearly elaborating the proposed methodology for addressing and undertaking each activity, relevant documents to be taken into account and the concept for the successful finalisation of the assignment; 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 7 years demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;

Financial Offer

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:

- Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 30,000. 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.
- Fee rates should be broadly consistent with the regional framework rates for these types of professional services.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 30 July 2025. The offers should be submitted through the website link [Apply now](#).

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 experience demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the concept note: An outline of work programme 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, 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 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: STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY

REF: 055-025

Support to the RCC Secretariat in Advancing Regional Action on Single-Use Plastics Phase-Out and Circular Plastic Packaging Solutions in the Western Balkans 6

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]