



Open Call for Consulting Services

Subject:	Support Western Balkans Six in the development of the Artificial Intelligence Roadmap
Title:	Technical assistance for the development of the Artificial Intelligence Roadmap for the Western Balkans Six
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Eligible:	Consulting companies/consortia of individual consultants
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	July – October 2026
Deadline for Application:	22 July 2026
Reference Number:	050-026

I. PURPOSE

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support the Western Balkans Six (WB6) in the development of a regional Artificial Intelligence (AI) Roadmap. The Roadmap will set out a shared, forward-looking framework that guides the deployment, governance and uptake of AI across the region, in line with European Union (EU) policy and regulatory developments, and international good practice.

The consultancy aims to support producing a regional AI Roadmap that is realistic, costed at an indicative level, measurable and implementable, and that can serve as a reference document for regional cooperation and for individual WB6 in their AI policy planning and EU accession processes.

II. BACKGROUND

The regional digital area is one of the four key areas of the Common Regional Market (CRM) 2024-2028 Action Plan (AP), adopted by the Leaders of the WB6, which provides a regionally-owned framework aligned with EU rules and standards. Under its digital pillar, the WB6 committed to developing a regional AI policy roadmap, supported by activities led by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

As AI is becoming a defining general-purpose technology of the next decade, it is increasingly central to the digital agenda of both the EU and the Western Balkans. At EU level, the AI Act¹ establishes a harmonised, risk-based legal framework for AI. The Coordinated Plan on AI² provides a roadmap of joint actions for Member States, and the AI Continent Action Plan and InvestAI initiative³ mobilise significant public and private investment in AI infrastructure, gigafactories and applications. International frameworks such as the OECD AI Principles and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI⁴ provide complementary guidance on responsible and human-centred AI.

Building on these frameworks, and in line with its mandate to promote regional cooperation and EU integration, the RCC aims to engage a consulting company or consortium of individual consultants to support the RCC Secretariat and WB6 in the development of a regional AI Roadmap that is anchored in the EU AI policy and regulatory framework and tailored to the specific needs and opportunities of the Western Balkans.

III. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and scope of the assignment

The overall objective of the consultancy is to support the development of a Western Balkans AI Roadmap that provides strategic approach, priorities, shared regional vision and concrete set of actions for AI development and adoption in the WB6, and is aligned with EU policy and regulatory frameworks for AI.

The consultancy includes the preparation of supporting analytical work, the design of the Roadmap, consultations with the WB6 and other stakeholders, and the provision of expert support to the RCC and WB6 throughout the process.

A consulting company/consortium of individual consultants will be engaged for this consultancy.

This assignment targets all WB6.

Specific Tasks

The tasks specified herewith are:

¹Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 (Artificial Intelligence Act), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj>.

²European Commission, Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence (2021 review), <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/plan-ai>.

³European Commission, AI Continent Action Plan and InvestAI initiative, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/ai-continent>.

⁴OECD AI Principles, <https://oecd.ai/en/ai-principles>; UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, <https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics>.

1. Inception phase and methodology. The consultant shall:
 - a) Propose a detailed methodology and work plan for the assignment, and a consultation plan;
 - b) Under RCC guidance, conduct a desk review of relevant EU, regional and domestic AI policy and regulatory documents, AI strategies, action plans and related documents of the WB6;
 - c) Propose an analytical framework for defined pillars of the AI Roadmap, including the indicators, data sources and analytical approaches to be used.
2. Provide baseline assessment and benchmarking, including but not limited to:
 - a) Assess the current state of AI readiness in each WB6 and across the region, based on collected information by RCC and inputs from WB6 institutions;
 - b) Identify key gaps, bottlenecks and opportunities for AI development and uptake in defined pillars, at both regional and domestic level;
 - c) Map/revise ongoing and planned initiatives, projects and financing instruments relevant to AI in the WB6, including those supported by the EU, international financial institutions, bilateral donors and private sector, when applicable;
 - a) Support development of the WB6 AI Roadmap based on the collected existing RCC inputs and the baseline assessment.
3. Define relevant pillars for the AI Roadmap as a whole, and propose:
 - a) Strategic objectives at the regional and domestic level;
 - b) Concrete actions, indicative timelines and responsible actors (RCC, WB6, regional partners, EU and international partners);
 - c) Key performance indicators (KPIs) and a monitoring and evaluation framework;
 - d) Indicative financing options and orders of magnitude where possible;
 - e) Risks, dependencies and mitigation measures, including but not limited to technological and ethical risks.
4. Consultations and stakeholder engagement. The consultant shall, in close coordination with the RCC Secretariat:
 - a) Support online and/or in-person consultations with the WB6;
 - b) Engage with regional and EU stakeholders, academia, research community, private sector representatives and civil society organisations as agreed with the RCC, if/when needed;
 - c) Provide expert advice and support during regional meeting(s) of the relevant working group and/or ad hoc regional meetings for the presentation, discussion and validation of the draft AI Roadmap;
 - d) Reflect the comments and inputs received from the WB6 and the RCC in subsequent drafts and prepare a comments table explaining how each input has been addressed.
5. The consultant shall:
 - a) Suggest a phased implementation plan with short-term (0-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years) and long-term (beyond 5 years) actions, if applicable;

- b) Provide guidance on the alignment of domestic AI strategies and action plans of the WB6, where they exist, with the regional AI Roadmap.

Methodology

The consulting companies/consortia of individual consultants are expected to develop the best approaches to undertake this task. However, the following guiding principles should be taken into consideration:

1. Desk review of relevant EU, regional and domestic AI policy, regulatory and strategic documents, as well as existing studies and reports relevant to the assignment;
2. Use of EU policy and regulatory frameworks (notably the EU AI Act, the Coordinated Plan on AI, the AI Continent Action Plan and InvestAI, and others) as the principal reference for alignment, while taking into account international frameworks such as the OECD AI Principles and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI;
3. Structured consultations and interviews with representatives of WB6 administrations, regulatory authorities, academia, research community, private sector and civil society, including focus groups where appropriate;
4. Application of foresight and scenario-based methods to identify emerging risks and opportunities for AI in the region;
5. Communication/interviews/consultations/focus groups with the representatives of administrations in the respective areas, if needed;
6. Any other method applicable.

Lines of Communication

- The company/consortium of individual consultants 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 the RCC expert will be organised to elaborate further on expectations and deliverables.

Timeframe

The engagement is expected to start in July 2026 and end on 20 October 2026.

	Deliverables	Due date
1.	Baseline assessment report on the state of AI readiness in the WB6, covering defined pillars, with comparative analysis against EU benchmarks and identification of regional gaps and opportunities.	Week after contract signing

2.	The draft report of the WB6 AI Roadmap, structured around defined pillars, with regional and economy-level objectives, actions, indicative timelines, financial options, etc. The draft Report should cover tasks of this ToR, and with possible additional indications provided by the RCC.	10 August 2026
3.	Final draft WB6 AI Roadmap covering all aspects of this ToR, as well as incorporating comments and inputs received from WB6 and the RCC Secretariat, including the implementation framework and comments table reflecting how inputs were addressed.	20 September 2026

Note:

- The date of the respective deliverable may be subject to change.
- Consultants should be available for on-demand fine-tuning of the document until the adoption of the AI Roadmap at the Berlin Process Summit.

IV. COMPETENCIES

Consultant Qualifications:

Criteria related to the consultants delivering the service⁵

Education:	Degree in computer science, data science, cybersecurity, engineering, law, economics, statistics, business, or other areas directly related to the subject of work. Master's Degree or PhD is an advantage.
Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in similar consultancies, with a demonstrated track record in artificial intelligence policy, digital strategy, or related areas; ▪ Demonstrated expertise in AI infrastructure (compute, cloud, data connectivity), AI governance and regulation (including alignment with the EU AI Act), AI skills and capacity building, AI financing and investment, and trust, ethics and societal aspects of AI; ▪ Experience working with governments, regulatory authorities, academia, the private sector and/or EU institutions on the development of domestic or regional AI strategies, roadmaps, or action plans is considered an advantage; ▪ At least two similar (in scope and complexity) projects completed in the last five years. The list should include details of their start and end date, scope, role and amount invoiced; ▪ Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly; ▪ In-depth knowledge of the WB6 covered by the assignment;

⁵ These criteria apply to the main consultant(s) and not for administrative or logistical team members

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrable experience in writing and reporting on complex multi-sector or multi-economy 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 desirable.
Other:	N/A

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.

QUALITY CONTROL

The consultant should ensure an internal quality control during the implementing and reporting phase of the assignment. The quality control should ensure that the deliverables comply with the above requirements and meet adequate quality standards. The quality control should ensure consistency and coherence between findings, conclusions and recommendations provided.

VI APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer:

The technical offer needs to contain the following:

- 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 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. A corresponding power of attorney must be attached to the bid;
- CVs of key members of the project team (**maximum 2 pages per consultant**), outlining the most relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference;
- 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 Statements of Availability (Annex I).

Data protection

Personal data (such as names, addresses, and CVs) shall be processed in accordance with the GDPR and other applicable data protection laws. The RCC implements appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect such personal data and ensure confidentiality.

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:

- 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.

For companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, VAT should be presented.

Note: According to the Indirect Taxation Authority Instruction and its status of an international organisation, the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat is entitled to VAT refund and is exempted from customs duties in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 22 July 2026 through the website link [Apply now](#).

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.

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 with that of the tender; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	40
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.	20
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.	40
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: 056-026

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 if this tender is successful, namely:

Full Name	Available from (Date)	Available until (Date)	Acceptance by signature