

Open Call for Consulting Services

Title:	Support to the RCC Secretariat in development of regional guidance on financing and incentive instruments for private-sector circular economy transition in the Western Balkans Six (WB6)
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Eligible:	Consulting companies /consortia of individual consultants
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	October – December 2026
Reference Number:	065-026

I. BACKGROUND

On 10 November 2020, during the Berlin Process Summit in Sofia, the Western Balkans Six (WB6) endorsed the Leaders' Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, aligning the region's strategic direction with the European Green Deal and establishing a common political mandate for the green transition. This commitment was operationalised through the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans 2021-2030, which translated the Green Agenda commitments into concrete actions, timelines and regional coordination and monitoring arrangements, including a dedicated Circular Economy pillar.

Building on this foundation, the Revised Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans 2025–2030 further shifts the Circular Economy pillar towards practical implementation. In particular, Action 20 focuses on accelerating waste reduction, reuse and recycling infrastructure and foresees, among other measures, the use of economic instruments, incentives for sorting and reuse, waste-hierarchy implementation guidance, and regional market and investment assessments for selected circular material flows. These measures require financing approaches that can mobilise and steer private-sector investment towards genuinely circular activities while remaining feasible under different institutional and market conditions across the WB6.

Private-sector investment is essential for scaling resource efficiency, waste prevention, reuse and repair, recycling, secondary raw materials, industrial symbiosis and circular business models.

However, different circular investments face different financing barriers and risk profiles, while public support schemes and financial products are not always designed around clear circularity criteria, measurable resource-efficiency outcomes or the specific needs of SMEs. A common regional reference can help public authorities, funds, financial institutions and development partners identify which financing and incentive instruments are most suitable for different types of circular investments and how such instruments can be designed to avoid supporting non-circular or lock-in investments.

Against this policy backdrop, the Regional Guidance on Financing and Incentive Instruments for Private-Sector Circular Economy Transition is intended as a practical implementation tool for the WB6. It will review and structure relevant options such as grants and co-financing schemes, credit lines, guarantees and risk-sharing instruments, blended finance, innovation vouchers, results-based support, selected fiscal or fee-based incentives where relevant, and public procurement-related incentives. The Guidance will translate these options into practical design principles, eligibility and selection criteria, circularity safeguards, monitoring indicators and implementation recommendations that can be adapted by WB6 institutions and financial partners.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives of the assignment

The objective of this consultancy is to provide expert technical support to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat in developing practical regional guidance on financing and incentive instruments that can stimulate private-sector investment in circular economy measures across the WB6.

The Guidance will provide a practical regional toolkit to support public authorities, environmental and development funds, financial institutions and development partners in designing or improving support instruments for circular investments, including:

- a comparable overview of representative financing and incentive approaches, key financing gaps and the main barriers affecting circular investments in the WB6;
- a circular investment typology and instrument-selection logic linking different investment needs and market barriers with suitable financing and incentive instruments; and
- ready-to-use design guidance covering eligibility and selection criteria, support and co-financing logic, circularity safeguards, monitoring indicators and practical implementation considerations for priority instrument models.

The assignment will provide a common regional reference for more targeted and results-oriented support to private-sector circular transition. Potential impacts include improved targeting of public support, stronger mobilisation of private finance, clearer investment eligibility rules, reduced risk of financing non-circular activities, and more consistent monitoring of circular economy results. The extent of these impacts will depend on how WB6 institutions and financial partners adapt and apply the Guidance within their respective legal, institutional and financial frameworks.

A consulting company or consortium of consultants will be engaged for this consultancy, hereinafter referred to as “the Consultant”.

This assignment targets all WB6 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

III. SCOPE OF WORK

Specific Tasks

The Consultant will conduct the following two sets of activities:

Set of activities 1: Analytical groundwork, circular investment typology and financing needs assessment

This set includes the following activities:

- Inception and detailed work planning with the RCC Secretariat, including methodology, timeline, stakeholder engagement plan and quality assurance/review cycles;
- Desk review of relevant Green Agenda for the Western Balkans commitments, selected EU and international good practice, and representative financing and incentive instruments relevant to private-sector circular economy investment;
- Develop a common circular investment typology covering, as relevant, resource and material efficiency, waste prevention, reuse and repair, recycling and secondary raw materials, industrial symbiosis, circular business model innovation and selected eco-industrial solutions, and identify the main financing and implementation barriers associated with these investment types;
- Conduct targeted consultations with relevant stakeholders to validate financing needs, instrument-design constraints and implementation realities. Consultations should ensure coverage of all WB6 and include, as relevant, public authorities or funds, financial institutions/development partners, business support organisations and private-sector representatives, with at least eight stakeholder consultations in total.

This set should lead to the development of an Inception Report and Regional Baseline and Gap Assessment, including: the detailed workplan and methodology; stakeholder engagement plan; a concise overview of representative financing and incentive approaches; the circular investment typology; a financing-barrier and market-failure matrix; and initial consultation findings identifying practical implications for the design of the Guidance.

* 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

Acceptance criteria: RCC confirms that the investment typology is clear and usable; financing barriers are linked to evidence and stakeholder input; the review distinguishes between instruments that address different market failures; and the findings provide a decision-ready basis for development of the regional toolkit.

Set of activities 2: Development, validation and finalisation of the Regional Financing and Incentive Toolkit

This set includes the following activities:

- Develop an instrument-selection matrix linking priority circular investment types and identified financing barriers with suitable financing and incentive options, indicating the rationale, target beneficiaries, typical delivery channel and circumstances in which each instrument is most appropriate;
- Assess and prioritise relevant financing and incentive approaches, including grants/co-financing, concessional or dedicated credit lines, guarantees and risk-sharing, blended finance, innovation vouchers, results-based support, and selected fiscal, fee-based or public procurement incentives where relevant and feasible;
- Develop at least five practical instrument-design fiches for priority models, covering: objective and market failure addressed; target beneficiaries; eligible investments and costs; support/co-financing logic; delivery and governance arrangements; application and selection criteria; monitoring and reporting requirements; implementation risks; and options to mobilise or leverage additional private finance;
- Develop a common circularity screening and eligibility framework, including minimum evidence requirements, suggested selection/scoring criteria, measurable circularity and resource-efficiency indicators, and safeguards to avoid financing investments that primarily perpetuate linear production, disposal dependency or other outcomes inconsistent with circular economy objectives;
- Define a concise monitoring framework with a core set of indicators that can be used to track financial mobilisation, beneficiary uptake and environmental/circularity results across different instrument types;
- Prepare concise regional implementation recommendations identifying how public authorities, funds, financial institutions and development partners can use the Guidance, including recommended sequencing, institutional roles and opportunities for coordination or blending of support;
- Stress-test the proposed instrument models against common implementation risks, including weak additionality, low beneficiary uptake, excessive administrative burden, inadequate project pipelines, insufficient private co-financing, weak monitoring and the risk of supporting investments with limited circularity benefits, and incorporate practical mitigation measures;

- Validate the draft package through a structured regional review, involving relevant WB6 stakeholders and financial/development partners, and incorporate substantive feedback into the final package;
- Finalise and hand over the Regional Guidance and all supporting tools in editable and PDF formats, together with a short executive brief and presentation deck for RCC use.

This set should lead to the final Regional Guidance on Financing and Incentive Instruments for Private-Sector Circular Economy Transition in the WB6, including: the circular investment typology; financing-barrier and instrument-selection matrix; assessment of relevant instrument options; at least five instrument-design fiches; circularity screening and eligibility checklist; sample selection/scoring criteria; KPI and monitoring framework; implementation recommendations; risk-mitigation notes; validation summary; executive brief; and presentation deck.

Acceptance criteria: The final package is practical, internally coherent and implementation-oriented; instrument recommendations are linked to specific investment needs and market failures; design fiches are sufficiently detailed to inform preparation or revision of support programmes; circularity safeguards are clear and verifiable; monitoring indicators are measurable; proposed instruments are proportionate to WB6 institutional capacity and private-sector realities; and stakeholder feedback is reflected in the final package.

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. The methodology shall prioritise practical programme and instrument design over broad conceptual analysis, ensuring that the assignment results in tools that can be used by institutions and financial partners when preparing or improving support schemes for circular investment.
2. Ensure consistency with the Revised Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan 2025–2030, particularly the Circular Economy pillar and Action 20, as well as relevant EU circular economy, waste-hierarchy and sustainable-finance policy principles.
3. Use a common circular investment typology and a clear market-failure/financing-barrier logic as the basis for selecting and designing instruments.
4. Distinguish between financing needs of different beneficiary and investment types, with particular attention to SMEs, administrative simplicity, investment readiness and the ability to mobilise private co-financing.
5. Build circularity and additionality safeguards into eligibility and selection criteria so that public support is directed to measurable circular outcomes and does not primarily subsidise business-as-usual or linear investments.

6. Define common, measurable indicators for financial mobilisation, implementation performance and circularity/resource-efficiency outcomes.
7. Use targeted consultations across all WB6 with public authorities, funds, financial institutions, development partners, business organisations and private-sector actors to validate feasibility and improve usability.
8. Provide a common regional core while clearly indicating where instrument design must remain adaptable to different legal, institutional, market and financial conditions across the WB6.
9. Test priority instrument models against common implementation risks and include proportionate mitigation measures.
10. Ensure consistency across the investment typology, instrument-selection matrix, design fiches, screening criteria, KPI framework and implementation recommendations, with all tools delivered in editable formats.

This assignment will be developed in close consultation with the RCC Secretariat in two stages.

II. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeline

The engagement is expected to last 45 calendar days from the date of contract signature.

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
1. Inception Report and Regional Baseline and Gap Assessment	Must include: (i) detailed workplan and methodology; (ii) stakeholder engagement plan and quality assurance/review cycles; (iii) concise review of representative financing and incentive approaches relevant to circular investment; (iv) common circular investment typology; (v) financing-barrier and market-failure matrix; and (vi) initial consultation findings and practical design implications. The deliverable should remain focused on evidence needed to develop the toolkit rather than provide an exhaustive inventory of all programmes in the WB6.	Within 15 calendar days of contract signature
2. Final Regional Guidance and Financing and Incentive Toolkit	Must include: (i) final circular investment typology; (ii) financing-barrier and instrument-selection matrix; (iii) assessment and prioritisation of relevant financing and incentive options; (iv) at least five practical instrument-design fiches; (v) circularity screening and eligibility checklist; (vi) sample selection/scoring criteria; (vii) core KPI and monitoring framework; (viii) implementation and risk-mitigation recommendations; (ix) validation summary and response-to-comments matrix; and (x) final editable and PDF files, supported by a short executive brief and presentation deck for RCC use.	Within 45 calendar days of contract signature

IV. REQUIREMENTS

The Consultant should meet the following requirements:

- Demonstrated professional expertise in sustainable/green finance, financial instruments, private-sector development, circular economy and/or resource-efficiency investment.
- At least three relevant assignments completed during the last seven years involving design, assessment or implementation of financing or incentive mechanisms for SMEs, green/circular investment, resource efficiency, innovation or related private-sector transition measures.
- Demonstrated knowledge of grants and co-financing schemes, credit lines, guarantees/risk-sharing, blended finance and other public or financial-sector instruments relevant to private investment.
- Familiarity with the institutional, business and financing environment in the WB6; experience across several WB6 will be considered a strong asset.

- Experience working with public authorities, financial institutions, international or regional organisations, development partners and private-sector stakeholders.
- Strong analytical, drafting, facilitation and communication skills, including the ability to translate financial and technical concepts into practical programme-design tools.
- Fluency in English is required; knowledge of one or more WB6 languages is an asset.

The proposed team shall comprise two key experts covering the profiles below. Key Expert 1 shall act as Team Leader.

Qualifications:

Key Expert 1 – Team Leader / Sustainable Finance Expert

Education:	Advanced university degree (Master’s Degree or equivalent) in economics, finance, environmental economics, business, public policy or another relevant field.
General professional experience:	Minimum 7 years of relevant professional experience in finance, financial instruments, private-sector development, SME finance, sustainable/green finance or related fields.
Specific professional experience:	Demonstrated experience in designing, assessing or implementing public or blended financing instruments, including at least three assignments involving grants/co-financing, credit lines, guarantees/risk-sharing, blended finance or other investment-support mechanisms. Experience should also demonstrate practical programme-design capacity, including eligibility and selection criteria, co-financing/support logic, monitoring and reporting and/or investment-pipeline development. Experience with circular economy, resource efficiency, green investment or investment programmes in the WB6 is a strong asset. Proven ability to lead multidisciplinary assignments and stakeholder consultations.
Language and role:	Fluency in English. Responsible for overall coordination, methodology, financial-instrument analysis, programme and incentive-design logic, implementation recommendations, integration of team inputs, quality assurance and communication with the RCC Secretariat.

Key Expert 2 – Circular Economy Expert

Education:	Advanced university degree (Master’s Degree or equivalent) in environmental sciences, environmental engineering, industrial ecology, economics, sustainable development or another relevant field.
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General professional experience:	Minimum 5 years of relevant professional experience in circular economy, resource/material efficiency, waste prevention, reuse/repair, recycling, secondary raw materials, industrial symbiosis or related areas.
Specific professional experience:	Demonstrated experience in defining or assessing circular investments, technical eligibility criteria, environmental/circularity indicators, investment needs or private-sector transition measures. Good knowledge of EU circular economy and waste-hierarchy principles. Experience in the WB6 and work with SMEs or industry will be considered an asset.
Language and role:	Fluency in English. Responsible for the circular investment typology, technical/circularity screening and eligibility criteria, safeguards, environmental performance indicators, and technical validation of the instrument-design fiches and recommendations.

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.
- 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 individual WB6 partners and stakeholders.

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 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 Consultants 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 Consultants, 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 the consulting 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;
- 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 7 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 demonstrating relevant experience in the subject matter;
- Statement of Availability, Annex I

Financial Offer (Annex II)

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 13,000. 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 5 October 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.

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 to that of the tender; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	35
A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultant(s):	35

CV(s) satisfies the criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference, education and experience demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	
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 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: 065-026

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

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.