BALKATHON

COMPETITION GUIDELINES

Contents

INFORMATION ON BALKATHON 2021

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Background

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) is organising Balkathon – "Smarten up for the future", a regional online competition that encourages Western Balkan (WB) collaboration, co-creation and real-life change, with the idea to help the region, businesses and citizens to strengthen their resilience to global challenges. Balkathon brings together young innovative people, start-ups, digital innovation centres, science parks, universities, small and medium enterprises, etc. from the Western Balkan region in order to trigger digital innovative and practical business solutions in different areas.

First Balkathon was organised on 16 July 2020, where 88 applicants had a chance to work with designated mentors for two days to develop their ideas further, followed by the screening and initial selection of the finalists by the pool of experts in the given fields from across the region. The selected finalists had a chance to present their ideas to the members of jury at the final event based on which the jury voted and selected the winners of Balkathon 2020.

The winners were requested to further develop their digital solutions in order to be applicable in all WB economies.

The spirit of this regional competition is: take part, start innovating, take actions and contribute to solving the real challenges in the Western Balkans.

1.2. Objective & Outcome

Balkathon is a regional competition that invites interested young people, start-ups, entrepreneurs, students, digital innovation hubs, scientific parks, universities, SMEs, etc. from all Western Balkan economies to propose and develop innovative digital solutions as a response to the challenges of our day-to-day life. The 4 most innovative proposals will be awarded 10.000€ each. The awards will be given to digital solutions whose top priority is to support the region in maintaining sustainability of the communities, businesses, cities and individual lives of each community member. Balkathon 2021 will also provide two special awards.

Once implemented, the proposals should provide a positive contribution to creating jobs, maintaining/enhancing operations, and facilitating digital transformation in deferent sectors.

1.3. Topics

Balkathon 2021 is looking for fresh, innovative and unique ideas and solutions in four thematic areas that will mark this year's competition. Consider these guidelines and the proposed topics as inspiration and directions, not as limitations. At Balkathon 2021 we focus on Green Cities, Smart Cities, eHealth and E-entrepreneur. The digital solutions must include innovative technological ideas with clear explanation of their implementation and sustainability in one of the following areas:

➤ Green Cities

Environmental pollution is not a new phenomenon, yet it remains the world's greatest problem facing humanity, and the leading environmental cause of morbidity and mortality. Human activities through urbanisation, industrialisation, mining, and exploration are at the forefront of global environmental pollution.

Response to the problem: We seek innovative ideas and digital solutions that can have positive impact in areas such as:

1. Waste Segregation
2. Waste Reduction & Circularity Economy
3. Food Waste
4. ReCycle and ReUse

The applicants are not limited to the above mentioned areas, all ideas are welcome.

➤ Smart Cities

One of the goals of Smart Cities is to create comfortable conditions for life and work in WB6 cities. Very few smart cities are built from scratch. Instead, they are constructed upon the existing systems, practices, infrastructure, and organisational structures which are not adjusted for modern smart city systems. Today, 54% of people worldwide live in cities, a proportion that is expected to reach 66% by 2050. Environmental, social, and economic sustainability is a must to keep pace with this rapid expansion that is taxing our cities' resources.

Response to the problem: We seek innovative digital solutions that can have positive impact in areas such as:

1. Smart mobility (Sustainable and safe transport systems)
2. Digital Arts & Culture – How might we make art accessible in our cities?
3. Urban Planning – How can citizens find parking places easily?

The applicants are not limited to the above mentioned areas, all ideas are welcome.

➤ E-health

Data Science and Artificial Intelligence are accelerating medical research and promoting the development of personalised and predictive medicine. Fight against coronavirus has highlighted what technology can bring to health, to empower and support healthcare professionals or provide patients with easier and safer access to medicine. On the other side, telemedicine and eHealth services are not sufficiently developed in WB 6 economies.

Response to the problem: We seek digital solutions that can improve people lives in areas such as:

1. Mental health and better quality of life
2. Medical devices of the future
3. Patient management and follow-up from diagnosis to treatment during and after the Covid-19 pandemic

4. Easy access to healthcare professionals

The applicants are not limited to the above mentioned areas, all ideas are welcome.

   ➢ E- entrepreneur

Anyone interested in starting and running their own business, based on innovative business ideas, needs a digital solution that can help them grow their business. Using electronic platforms in data networks and offering products and / or services based on a purely electronic value creation is possible through the development of information technology. Depending on the area of E-entrepreneurship, it is very important for small businesses to have different types of digital solutions, such as online channels for sale, offering products, etc.

Response to the problem: We seek innovative digital solutions that can have positive impact in areas such as:

1. Online channels for offering different types of products.

2. Online tools for business process improvement, digitalisation of internal process, etc.

The applicants are not limited to the above mentioned areas, all ideas are welcome.

1.4. Who can apply?

Geographic limitations: Only applicants from WB6 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*[1], Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) can apply to Balkathon, while digital solutions should address a need or challenge in any WB6 within the context of a given topic.

Time limitations: After the competition award ceremony, applicants need to develop, finalise and implement digital solutions within a six-month timeframe.

Relevance: The digital solutions must respond to the identified priority areas of the competition (see 1.3.).

Applicant limitations:

   ➢ Digital solutions submitted and implemented by registered teams are eligible to participate in the Balkathon competition.

   ➢ Eligible applicants:

      - Teams should be composed exclusively of citizens of the WB6 economies;

      - Teams are encouraged to be composed of members from two or more Western Balkan economies;

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[1] * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

- Teams are encouraged to be composed of qualified individuals; ICT companies, students, non-governmental organisations; educational institutions; start-up companies, etc.;

- Proven experience in projects relevant to the priority areas of the competition will be taken as advantage;

➢ Applicants will be disqualified from participating in Balkathon competition if they are in one of the following situations:

- Involved in previous competitions organised by RCC[2];

- They hold an active contract with RCC at the time of application;

➢ Applicants will be disqualified at any time from the competition and/or from the final Award Ceremony if it is proved they tried to obtain confidential information, exert influence over RCC, judges or authorised contractual party during the proposal evaluation process;

➢ General rules[3] (more information can be found on www.rcc.int/balkathon):

- Participants can register only as a team;

- Applicant can get inspiration from existing solutions, however plagiarism, copy and/or any other form of treachery or deception are strictly forbidden;

- Only one team member can submit the team's solution;

- Registered applicants or teams can be disqualified and excluded from Balkathon for breaching one of the rules defined in the Rules of Balkathon2021, Statement of Honour or competition Guidelines.

1.5. When and where?

Registration process starts on 5 May 2021 and ends on 19 May 2021 at 12:00 (CET+1).

The Award Ceremony will be held online on 28 May 2021.

1.6. How to apply?

All applicants need to prepare documents elaborated in the section "Application documents" and submit them by 19 May 2021, 12:00 (CET+1) via registration form on the website: www.rcc.int/balkathon .

Please note that the maximum size of incoming e-mail/registration form submission is 10 MB. In case the application documents exceed this size, you have to use the .zip data compression file format, compress all documents to a single .zip file and send it via WeTransfer.com to the email: balkathon@rcc.int.

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[2] This refers to individuals from the winning teams of Balkathon, Futourismo, etc.
[3] In addition to being published on the website, Rules of Balkathon2021 and competition Guidelines will be automatically sent to applicants upon registration.

When applying, identify your submission as responding to this competition by naming the subject line of your message as: BALKATHON Application.

Any concepts submitted after the deadline, not prepared in accordance with the competition instructions or being incomplete will be rejected.

One team can submit maximum one application under this competition.

1.7. Application documents

All teams have to submit the following documents:

- A Concept Note (max 3 A4 pages, font Calibri size 12) that should include 4 (four) mandatory parts and 1 (one) optional part:

  o Part 1 (Concept and Strategy): Outline of the objectives, concept, approach and ambition of the project (idea/digital solution). Please indicate whether the project is already ongoing or new.

  o Part 2 (Solution): The methodological and operational approach to the problem and the solution(s) addressing the technical criteria, as well as activities to maximise impact, e.g. dissemination and exploitation.

  o Part 3 (Implementation): Project implementation scheme including a work plan, inputs/outputs (deliverables) and resources.

  o Part 4 (Organisation and Management): Outline of the operations including, for example, the organisational/management structure, roles/responsibilities, IT needs, etc.

  o Part 5 (optional): Where possible, provide samples, demos or design concepts in a standard digital format, or describe the design of your proposed solution in sufficient detail for the jury to visualise your intention.

- Names and short bios of applicants, outlining relevant knowledge and experience in line with the Balkathon competition goals, including contact details (e-mail, LinkedIn, website), if available.

- Profile of the team's composition should be submitted by the team leader.

- List of references for relevant activities implemented (e.g. implemented projects, mobile apps, designed platforms, etc.), if available.

- Statement of Honour (download from Balkathon website www.rcc.int/balkathon).

1.8. Key dates

Dates:	Activities:
5 May 2021,	Registration process starts

12:00 (CET+1)	
19 May 2021, 15:00 (CET+1)	End of registration process
19- 20 May 2021	Pre-selection of the registered teams (Phase I, 10 teams per topic selected)
21 May 2021	List of shortlisted teams published on the website
24-25 May 2021	Mentors working with teams, start of the competition
26 May 2021, 12:00 (CET+1)	Submission of final presentation
27 May 2021	Phase II, selection of 3 teams for each topic and publishing finalists on the website
28 May 2021	Announcement of the winners and Award Ceremony (Phase III - selection of winners)

2. INFORMATION ON THE COMPETITION PROCESS

2.1. Selection and evaluation process

All eligible applications will be judged by a panel of ICT professionals from WB economies and professionals from particular area(s), as well as members of RCC. The proposals must be original and have not been submitted, published or used before. Applicants that are found to have breached this rule will be disqualified.

All applications that meet basic technical criteria will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
- Quality
- Originality
- Feasibility
- Sustainability

The selection/evaluation process will be performed in three phases (see section 2.2.). Each phase will contain certain/additional criteria.

2.2. Competition selection phases

Phase I

The first phase will be conducted after the closing of the registration process and presents "filtering" of ideas that best fit into the BALKATHON 2021 priority areas. After evaluation, the shortlisted applicants (10 teams per each topic) will be offered a mentorship assistance to

help them upgrade their ideas. Technical criteria mentioned in the section above will be used for this phase. The list of selected applicants will be published on www.rcc.int/balkathon .

Phase II

After mentoring sessions, the candidates will submit their final concept note and video presentation (more info will be provided on www.rcc.int/balkathon). Members of the jury will evaluate final concept notes, and 3 selected applicants from each topic will present their ideas at the final event. Up to 14 applicants will be selected for the final competition. Criteria used for this phase are listed in section 2.3. The list of shortlisted applicants will be published on www.rcc.int/balkathon .

Phase III

Applicants selected for the final competition will present their ideas before the members of jury in the following concept:

- 3 minutes for the presentation
- 2 minutes for the jury questions

Applicants with the highest score will be awarded, and the winners will be announced at the end of the Awards event on 28 May 2021.

2.3. Evaluation criteria

Criteria for the first phase:

- Novelty & Innovation
- Excellence
- Potential
- Quality of management
- Efficiency of implementation

Additional criteria for the second phase:

- Quality of business plan
- Quality of the team
- Quality of marketing plan
- Quality of financial plan
- Other (implementation plan, impact of the solution, etc.)

Additional criteria for the third phase:

- Quality of the presentation of a business plan

Criteria for the special awards:

- Both teams have to be best ranked among the shortlisted, and:
  o For the first special award, all team members have to be between 18 and 30 years old

o For the second special award, all team members have to be female. In case no team meets this criteria, teams in which the majority of members are female will be taken into consideration

NOTE: More information on the criteria will be published on the website www.rcc.int/balkathon.

2.4. Mentorship programme

The shortlisted applicants will have two-day mentorship sessions, with mentors that are experienced in their respective area. The RCC will prepare the list of mentors with different background and experience in different areas. Each team will have an opportunity to choose mentors with whom they want to work based on their needs for further development of the idea.

The mentorship programme will be focused on upgrading the relevant ideas.

Applicants are encouraged to work on their ideas from the very beginning of Balkathon, from 5 May.

Shortlisted applicants are encouraged to prepare a list of questions, needed information, etc. in order to focus mentorship sessions on upgrading their ideas as much as possible.

Mentorship sessions are not conceptualised in a way to get ideas for development, but to further develop and upgrade the existing idea.

2.5. Jury of the competition

The jury will be composed of different members for each phase of the competition, coming from the following representative institutions:

- First phase: RCC and consultants engaged by RCC for the organisation of competition
- Second phase: World Health Organisation (WHO), RCC and representatives of Innovation Centres from the WB6
- Third phase: representatives from WB6 nominated by Digital Component Contact Points, WHO and RCC

2.6. Winners of the competition

Four winning awards will be given based on the jury evaluation and criteria defined in section 2.3. The winning ideas will be awarded 10.000€ each, including additional mentoring support to implement their idea.

The winners will conclude the Agreement/Statement with the RCC in order to regulate their rights and obligations. In case that the winner with the first awarded idea withdraws from the follow-up procedures or is disqualified, the next candidate with the highest score for the given topic will be awarded.

The Agreement/Statement will define the procedure whereby the first instalment of the prize will be awarded immediately, while the second one after the development of the solution.

2.7. Special awards of the competition

RCC will provide two additional special awards to the finalists: 7,000€ each. Special awards will be given by Secretary General of RCC[4].

The finalists receiving the special award will conclude the Agreement/Statement with the RCC in order to regulate their rights and obligations. In case that the finalists receiving the special award withdraw from the follow-up procedures or are disqualified, the next candidate on the list who meets the criteria for special award will be awarded.

The Agreement/Statement will define the procedure whereby the first instalment of the prize will be awarded immediately, while the second one after the development of the solution.

2.8. Appeal procedure

Each applicant has 7 days from the moment of receiving the results to send an appeal. The appeals should be sent to balkathon@rcc.int.

The RCC will provide written response within 7 days from the submission of the appeal.

2.9. Other relevant information

The entire competition will be held online via different platforms such as Slack, Zoom and Educor. Slack will be used as a tool for direct communication between participants, mentors and RCC. Separate channels inside Slack will be created and shared with participants. Zoom will be used for communication between participants and mentors. Educor will be used for the final event. Participants will get detailed instructions regarding the use of the platforms.

In order to participate in full capacity, each participant needs to have:

- Laptop/PC
- Stable internet connection
- Audio and video integrated in the device or as separate equipment

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[4] Special awards will be subject of meeting additional criteria (for more information see section 2.3)