

Call for Consulting Services

Title:	Technical support to creating a regional framework for Gender-responsive Green Finance in the Western Balkans
Eligible:	Individual experts
RCC Department:	Programme Department
Reporting to:	RCC Secretariat
Duration:	16 September 2024 - 20 December 2024
Reference number:	048-024
Deadline:	3 September 2024

I. BACKGROUND

The overarching goal of Common Regional Market (CRM) Regional Industrial Area encompasses women economic empowerment (WEE), with particular focus on women entrepreneurship. According to WEF's latest Global Gender Gap Report 2024, a lot of effort is still required in the dimension of economic empowerment of women: the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap has only closed by 60.5% (in the 146 economies covered in the 2024 Index).

Following the launch of the [Regional Network of Women in Entrepreneurship](#), RCC conducted a thorough stocktaking of women entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans which identified key challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the region. In addition, the [study](#) presented a set of recommendations, both at regional and economy level, which need to be taken into account and addressed in order to improve women economic empowerment agendas as well as support the shift to a green economy.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Objective of the assignment

The objective of this assignment is to address some of the key recommendations from the study [“Women Entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans: Stocktaking on constraints and good practices”](#), which can be grouped into three broad pillars:

- Improving access to finance for women entrepreneurs;
- Financial literacy and entrepreneurial learning;
- Supporting women in the green transition and, in particular, circular economy.

Some specific measures under each of these pillars include (*see study for further details*):

- preparing and implementing measures to increase access to finance for women-led enterprises;
- considering alternative instruments of access to finance for women entrepreneurs;
- scaling up entrepreneurial learning and financial literacy at all educational levels;

- supporting women in rural areas, agro-food, circular economy, etc.

The recommendations have one common denominator: the need for a Gender-responsive Finance, which coupled with financial literacy, will support women entrepreneurs to thrive. Additionally, considering the ambitious goals of the green transition, there is a need for a Gender-responsive Green Finance to facilitate women entrepreneurs' efforts towards a green and circular economy.

Access to finance is one of the key dimensions (and persisting issue) affecting the business environment in the Western Balkans, highlighted also in the latest OECD Competitiveness Outlook (where total financial support to support SME access to finance varies from as low as 1% of GDP in Serbia and North Macedonia to 3.1% and 3.7% in Montenegro and Kosovo^{*}, respectively).

Hence, RCC invites applications for developing actionable proposals and a policy framework for a Gender-responsive (Green) Finance in order to enhance access to finance for women entrepreneurs in the Western Balkans and create preconditions for easier access to finance and easier transition to a green economy (including but not limited to financial literacy, suitable financial instruments and services for women-led enterprises; as well as encompassing the sectorial perspective where untapped potential of women entrepreneurs has been observed).

Finally, addressing these recommendations does not only emerge from [CRM Action Plan 2021-2024](#) actions but paves the way for CRM2 Action Plan measures on access to finance, green industry, women economic empowerment and financial literacy; all important determinants of an enabling business environment and enhanced competitiveness of women entrepreneurs.

Specific Tasks

The expert is expected to:

Provide an actionable methodology or framework to enable implementation of the specific recommendations from the above mentioned study related to Gender-responsive Green Finance, aiming to improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs (WEs) in the Western Balkans, supporting the green transition of WEs through access to finance and enhancing financial literacy:

- a. The methodology or framework should be well-detailed, highlighting relevant stakeholders, preconditions, potentials and limitations, timeline (including short-term to long-term policy actions), etc.; it should propose specific instruments (e.g. policy interventions, legislative solutions, financial products, etc.), national or regional as applicable, for implementing the recommendations;
- b. Concrete and realistic actions towards a Gender-responsive Green Finance should be proposed.

III. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Timeframe

^{*} 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.

The assignment is expected to start by mid-September 2024 and end in December 2024.

Methodology

The expert is expected to suggest the most suitable methodology for the successful completion of the assignment.

Lines of Communication

The task will be implemented in close consultation with the RCC Secretariat. The contracted bidder will report to the Expert on Competitiveness. As appropriate, (online) meetings with RCC experts will be organised to agree on expectations and deliverables.

Deliverables will be sent to the RCC Secretariat within the set deadlines. RCC Secretariat will conduct a quality assessment and approval of each deliverable.

IV. 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
1.	Detailed methodology and work plan submitted and agreed with the RCC	26 September 2024
2.	Submission of an Interim Report	4th week of October 2024
3.	Presentation and consultation of preliminary recommendations with the Working Group on Industrial Development (WGID) and Regional Network of Women in Entrepreneurship (RNWE)	To be agreed during implementation period (tentatively mid-November 2024)
4.	Draft Final Report	Beginning of December 2024
5.	Submission of the final report (incorporating RCC feedback and comments)	20 December 2024

V. REQUIREMENTS

Education:	- An advanced university degree (Master's Degree or equivalent; PhD preferred) in finance, economics, public policy or other field of relevance for the assignment.
-------------------	---

Experience:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in economics; finance; research and policy advice; gender issues; institutional development and/or other related fields; - Proven analytical skills and experience in strategy design; - Proven professional record of working on green finance, climate finance, research, public policy, gender issues is a strong asset; - Previous experience working with the Western Balkan economies in the abovementioned areas is an asset; - Proven professional record of working with international and/or regional organisations; - Proven analytical skills and ability to conceptualise and write concisely and clearly, preferably evidenced by a list of published reports/articles in English; - 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, if needed;
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 language(s) is considered an advantage.

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 expert 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.

VI. APPLICATION RULES

The application needs to contain the following:

- Technical Offer;
- Financial Offer.

Technical Offer

- CV of expert(s), outlining relevant knowledge and experience as described in the Terms of Reference, along with contact details of referees;
- An outline work programme of a maximum of 5 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;
- Application Submission Form (Annex I);
- Signed Statement of Availability (Annex II).

Financial Offer (Free format)

The financial offer should reflect the following:

- All figures should be expressed in EUR;
- Maximum budget should not exceed EUR 12,000.

NOTE:

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.

Submission of applications:

Applications need to be submitted by 3 September 2024, by 24:00 Central European Time.

VII. EVALUATION RULES

The assignments will be awarded to the highest qualified applicant based on the skills, expertise, and the quality of the concept note and the cost-effectiveness of the financial offer.

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the profile and competencies of the candidate and the responsiveness to the Terms of Reference for consulting services. The best value for money is established by weighing technical quality against price on an 80/20 basis.

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 nature comparable to that of the Call; experience with clients comparable to the Contracting Authority.	35
A.2. Quality and professional capacity of the consultants: CV satisfies the criteria set forth in the ToR, education and experience demonstrate professional capacity and experience required.	35
A.3 Quality of the Work Plan Work plan outlining proposed action by the consultant, sources of information to be used, timeline and tools to be employed by the consultant;	30
B. Financial Proposal/ 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 appeal.

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